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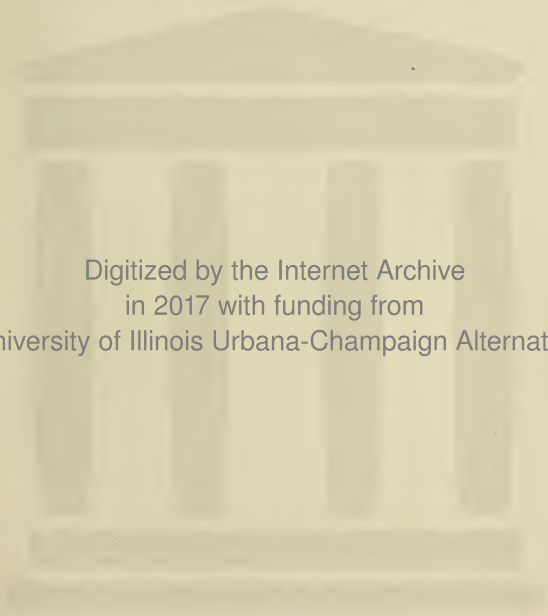
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HYPNOTISM

by

Jules Claretie

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JUL 1 1895

"TO DOCTOR PAUL HORTELOUP.

Dear Doctor and Friend:

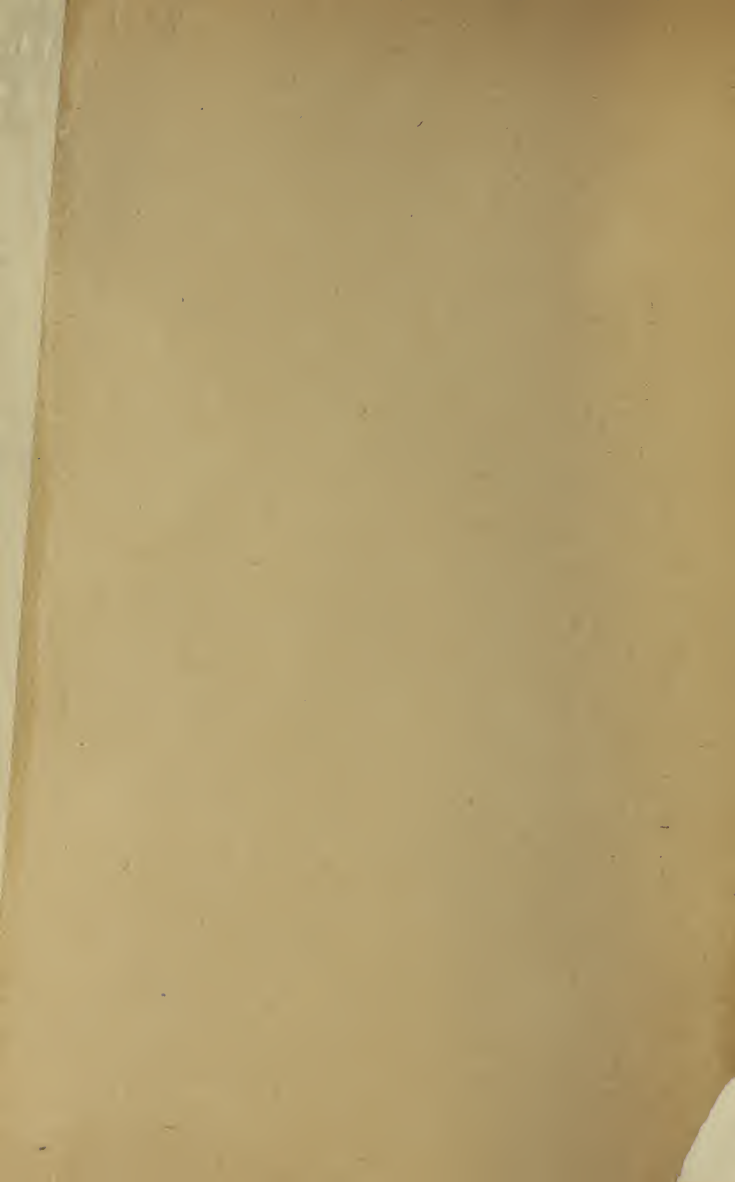
Permit me to dedicate this study to you in memory of our many conversations on the redoubtable and alarming question of magnetic suggestion, a subject on which you sometimes accuse me of being too much of an enthusiast.

Though you emphasize and lay stress on their danger, you are less fervent and have less faith than myself in these matters; but, after all, I merely relate what I have seen, give voice to what I have studied. Within and without the walls of the Salpêtrière, in experiments, in the writings and testimonies of learned specialists, I have sought the proof of that suggestion which some day will arise before the magistrates as the most terrible of juridistic problems; and the story I am about to relate is the result of both my observations and reflections. I hope that the day will come, as many predict, when it will be possible to make use of hypnotic suggestion in therapeutic and moral matters to cure the body and modify the state of the soul. In the meantime, I fear this redoubtable force, which might perhaps be utilized for good, may become a formidable arm for evil and crime. But then, all discoveries have their perils, progress its two blades, like certain knives; powder, the cause of so much bloodshed, has nevertheless made a breach in the Old World, through which the future marched on.

Therefore, my dear Doctor, pray accept this legal-medico study as a problem of criminality which I have contemplated face to face, and especially as a testimony of my deep and grateful affection.

Your devoted friend,

"JULES CLARETIE."



HYPNOTISM.

CHAPTER I.

HE had been attracted to Montmartre by the vulgar curiosity of the popular festival, by the appetite for those foreign gaities, which, to his pessimistic mind, seemed still more ironical and irritating than the fashionable kermesses of which he read in the newspapers.

Jean Mornas experienced a sort of painful voluptuousness in intensifying his distress as the son of a poor niggardly *bourgeois* by contrasting it with the silly laughter of the crowds around the stalls, the animation of the marksmen in the shooting galleries, and the screeching music of the wooden horses, turning incessantly like the flight of dead illusions or the whirlwind of withered leaves on a boisterous autumn day. The heartrending melancholy of

the hand-organ penetrated his being with the acuteness of a human shriek; and yet he remained there, in the midst of the vulgar, jostling crowd, until at last the exterior boulevard began to be deserted, the lights in the stalls died out one by one, and slumber and shadows fell heavily on the tents of the mountebanks and the long rows of peripatetic merchants, the fronts of whose shops closed in succession like so many tired eyelids.

At last all were closed; there only remained a few of those little booths where the young men of the wandering tribes played strange games for small stakes with the sparkling eyes and contracted lips of fashionable gamblers risking a fortune at a baccarat table.

After watching the players for a long time with evident interest, for to him it seemed only natural that everyone should try, and, if need be, steal for gain, Jean Mornas thought of returning to his gloomy quarters in a little house in the Latin Quarter, and slowly turned away from the long lines of stalls now almost all en-

veloped in darkness; the only lights visible being the dull gleams filtering through the dark green curtains of a few of the tents.

As he went down the Boulevard de Rochechouart, toward the Place Pigalle, which he was obliged to cross to reach the left bank of the river, he was thinking of the free life of the mountebanks, now huddled together in their movable houses, of those wanderers of modern times who attend all the fêtes and fairs with their monkeys, serpents or tigers; and a flood of foolish ideas of emancipation and Bohemian pleasures rushed through his brain, as he conjured up visions of their happy life in the open air. His dreams of this ideal existence were not of long duration, however, for as he went down the deserted street, gazing vacantly before him, he caught sight of a slender girlish figure, hurrying along the now deserted Circus and closely followed by two men of suspicious appearance who seemed particularly anxious to overtake her.

As the trio hastened on, the flaring gas lamps

casting their shadows upon the sidewalk, there seemed to exist a sort of ironical antithesis between the woman's graceful outlines and the heavy figures of the two ruffians behind her.

The apparition of a woman alone on the streets at that hour interested Jean Mornas at once, and he watched the group attentively. Suddenly a shriek pierced the stillness of the night. One of the men had seized the young girl by the wrist, and she had called for assistance.

The two ruffians had already disappeared amongst the long rows of silent stalls, when Mornas, who had rushed forward at the first call, arrived at the young girl's side and caught her fainting form in his arms.

Mornas' first thought was that he appeared a little ridiculous in his role of knight-errant, and he asked himself if it were not a very stupid and frightfully vulgar adventure; but under the light of a gas jet he quickly perceived a long scratch on the pretty little hand

of the unconscious girl he still held in his arms, from which the blood was flowing, and taking it gently in his, he examined it closely.

Hanging from the wrist which one of the men had seized, was a small silver bracelet, from which was suspended a charm. The bracelet had been broken in the short struggle, and one of the sharp points had pierced the skin and caused the long red mark.

It was a miracle that the men had not taken the humble ornament when they attacked the woman, but her cries had no doubt alarmed them and they had fled without securing any booty.

Jean gazed at her face; she was quite young and very pretty; her pale features were singularly sweet and intelligent. When she recovered consciousness, her first movement on perceiving the stranger was one of terror, but Jean quickly reassured her, saying:

“They have gone.”

She understood him at once, and, though still trembling, and with an expression of

alarm in her strangely haggard eyes, she instinctively placed her right hand upon her left wrist and examined the broken bracelet in evident anxiety.

“Are you searching for something, Mademoiselle?” asked Jean.

“Yes, a small medal,” she replied.

The medal was still hanging at the end of the silver wire, however, and a joyful smile came to her lips as her eyes fell upon it.

“Ah!” she exclaimed with a sigh of relief. “But I must thank you, Monsieur,” she added. “Had it not been for you—”

“For me!” echoed Jean, in surprise.

“Yes, those terrible men—”

“Oh! I had little trouble in scaring them away,” he interposed. “They were already far from here when I reached you. “But,” he added, drawing closer to her, “how do you happen to be in such a place at this hour, and alone?”

“I was detained at the shop,” she replied, unhesitatingly. “And besides, I am never

afraid. This is the first time anyone was ever attacked in this neighborhood."

"Do you live near here?" asked Jean.

"Yes, quite near. At Montmartre."

She bowed to him with a sweet expression of gratitude in her eyes as she said this, and, still keeping her hand upon the charm of the broken bracelet as if she valued it above all else, she made a movement as if to go on.

But Mornas firmly and respectfully insisted on accompanying her. He declared he would not abandon her in the darkness, where her former aggressors might still be lying in wait; and, in all confidence, she allowed herself to be escorted to her home by this young man, who walked at her side as if he were an elder brother.

On the way Jean Mornas learned who she was: A working girl, living with her mother, and returning home a little later than usual that evening, having been detained at the shop by pressing work.

She spoke in a low voice, in a timid, yet dig-

nified tone. Mornas had not questioned her, and her simple confidences came quite naturally as from a young girl, who was gradually recovering from the violent emotions she had experienced a few minutes before and now tried to make light of her adventure.

"Nevertheless, had it not been for you, my poor medal would have been carried off."

"And you also, Mademoiselle," interposed Jean.

"And I also," she repeated. "But perhaps one protected the other."

Then after a short pause, she added: "My mother gave me the charm. The only one I have. And the medal is the one I received when I made my first communion. That is why I value them so highly."

Mornas, who was imbued with all the scepticisms of the day, was greatly surprised at this last confidence. He had certainly not expected to hear such words at that hour on the boulevards of the old suburb. But, after all, he had long since ceased to be surprised at any-

thing he might meet in Paris. He was well aware that the great city contained all sorts of people, paste amongst its jewels, and jewels in its mire. This young girl, to whom he listened with such interest, was certainly nothing of an actress and evidently spoke with innocent truth. Jean Mornas even experienced a joyous surprise at her words. It seemed like the incense of his former beliefs, a perfume of his youth caressing and soothing him with its fresh sweetness.

As he crossed the Place Pigalle at her side and gazed at the long lines of gas-lights on the empty boulevard, he asked himself if it were not indiscreet to escort this child to the very threshold of her home.

"Oh! no indeed, you do not inconvenience me in going to the door," she said, in reply to his half hesitating excuses. "And if it were not so late, mamma would be only too happy to thank you for what you have done. Poor mamma!—how anxious she will be about me in future—I am half inclined to say nothing

about it." Then, after a pause, she added: "But yes, I must tell her—I tell her everything."

Her innocent babble almost seemed like a joyous spring chorus in that chilly night; the girl's childish voice surprised and charmed him. He could have wished that this night might last forever, and that the walk might last as long as the night.

They at last reached the top of a steep street leading to Montmartre, and after going a few paces down a cross street, the young girl stopped, saying:

"It is here!"

Mornas mechanically raised his eyes to the board on the corner bearing the name of the street. It was Rue Audran.

A mere lane, opening from Rue Abbesses and lined on both sides with common looking houses, the homes of poor laborers and small tradespeople.

At the door of one of the low houses the girl stopped and extended her hand to Jean.

"Once more, accept my heartfelt thanks," she said, earnestly.

The light from a gas-lamp fell upon her face as she stood there, betraying a faint coloring on the cheeks which had been so pale a few minutes before.

"I shall probably never see you again, Mademoiselle," he said, "but I am very happy to have been—"

"And why should you not see me?" she interrupted. "Mamma will certainly desire to know you."

"Your mother," he murmured. "I do not even know her name."

"Madame Lorin."

"And you, Mademoiselle, you?"

"I!" she exclaimed with a merry little laugh, "I am called the same as she."

"I know that," said Jean, hesitatingly—"But—your own name—"

"Oh! I bear a name that I do not like very much," she replied, after a moment of hesitation. "I am called Lucie."

“It is a very pretty name!” he murmured.

“Do you think so?—I don’t—Good night!”

She had rung the door-bell, and the little door had opened on the dark corridor within.

Jean Mornas saw Lucie disappear and the door close behind her, but he lingered there for a moment longer, gazing pensively at the house, then casting a last glance at the little street, the existence of which he had ignored until that night, he went back toward the city and entered his own abode—on the other side of Paris—wondering to himself at the strange place in which belief had taken refuge, and still haunted by the recollection of the pretty blonde head of the young girl, who had seemed so exquisite as she bent over to examine the broken bracelet by the light of the flickering gas-jet.

Once in his own apartment, however, he attempted to scoff at the emotion he had experienced while in the company of this child, who had so gratefully and confidingly allowed him to escort her through the streets to her own door;

and it was with a scornful laugh that he recalled and repeated her words aloud in his bare, cheerless room:

“‘The charm given me by my mother!—My first communion medal!’ Can it be possible there are still fossils of that kind on Parisian soil? But no, indeed! Mademoiselle Lucie merely played the virtuous maiden for effect! —You are far too simple, my poor Jean; you, who boasted of believing in nothing—Perhaps she may be no better, in spite of the little medal and her virgin airs, than the two foot-pads who attacked her. And yet!—”

He fell asleep still thinking of that confident, trustful smile on Lucie Lorin’s lips, and of the sweet face with its frame of golden hair.

CHAPTER II.

“To what—yes, to what will this love-making lead me?” thought Jean Mornas a few days later, after basking in Lucie’s smile once more. “To some piece of folly or absurdity!—”

How often he had sworn never to be guilty of anything bordering on the absurd—and as to follies, his ambition would surely preserve him from them. For Jean Mornas was ambitious; ambitious of fortune, of a life of ease and happiness, of everything which promised to satisfy his appetite for the great feast of modern life.

Of robust health, with fiery blood and omnivorous appetite, he boldly faced the problem of life, with the audacity of a conqueror and the violence of an insurgent.

“I was born in the midst of the orange

groves at Nice," he was wont to say, with a sort of wild gaiety and bravado, "and I shall die at the mouth of a cannon or on the ramparts of a barricade. Sunlight and flowers at the beginning, powder and mire at the end—such is the story of my life—I know it beforehand!"

This serio-tragic declaration was invariably delivered in the deepest and most majestic tone at his command, in the crowded cafés of the left bank, at all student gatherings, and, in fact, wherever and whenever the occasion presented itself. Having attracted the general attention of the assemblage by this startling prophetic assertion, Jean Mornas would then cast his dark sparkling eyes about him, twist the point of his black beard, and watch the effect produced on his hearers. Then, shrugging his shoulders and raising his head, he would fix his gaze on the horizon, as if he saw his future there before him, and add, impressively: "Yes, I shall perish thus. Unless--unless I make a fortune and go out quietly on a bed of feathers--like a duck!"

The Latin Quarter was used to these outbursts; he always spoke so loudly, making his metallic voice resound with the sonorousness of a clarion. Even in the discussion of the trivial subjects or in conversation with his fellow students he affected the tone of a popular haranguer. During one entire evening he had been known to maintain to his companions in a low resort that the old code of morals was a decayed dowager, virtue a duenna, and that a man who would *not kill the mandarin* in this life was an imbecile.

Yes, the mandarin, you have all heard of him, the famous ideal mandarin of whom so much has been said without anyone knowing very clearly who invented him. The mandarin, who, though in China, can be killed by a mere wish, even from this distance!—kill the mandarin! Yes, that was it. He who would hesitate to twist this Chinaman's neck must be not only simple, but beastly stupid as well to have any scruples about the matter. Ah! the mandarin! It was not a question of

knowing whether this mandarin might be killed, it was simply a question of meeting him, that was all! Ah! to meet this infernal mandarin face to face—that was the difficulty, the great problem! “As for immolating him,” and Mornas would laugh scornfully, “if we were certain there were no judges in Berlin, in Paris, nor in Peking, one would be a pure idiot to hesitate! I shall kill the mandarin whenever you wish!” he would conclude, in his bombastic manner. “Simply give me the number of the street on which he resides—In the flowery kingdom, overthere—or even nearer at hand!” And Jean Mornas’ jeering laugh rang through the room with these sinister declarations. “So the rumbling of the thunder ever follows the lightning,” he would say to anyone who commented on the peculiar ring of his sarcastic chuckle.

The mannerisms with which Jean declaimed upon this burning subject had earned him the nickname of “*The Mandarin*” amongst his auditors, who amused themselves watching him

light his "fireworks," as they called his vehement outbursts. "Have you seen the Mandarin? Will the Mandarin be here this evening?" were questions frequently heard in the Quarter, where, without having produced either a book or a poem, nothing, in fact, but wild speeches, Jean Mornas, the Mornas of the orange groves of Nice and the barricades of Paris, passed for a sort of celebrity and inhaled to satiety the invigorating perfume of the nosegay of glory.

Glory, indeed? He stoutly maintained his utter scorn for it! Besides, they would loan nothing on it at the pawnshop!

He was a man of the period who believed in success only, who denied the existence of the ideal and considered as dupes all those who, in the pursuit of chimeras, upheld the supremacy of those antique virtues of the vulgar herd: patience, simplicity and honesty.

Since he had left his southern home to come to Paris in search of fortune, he had moved heaven and earth; he would have wallowed in the mire, and swept the pavements, as he ex-

pressed it, to attain the position he desired. At the age of twenty-eight, with powerful talents, we might be led to believe he craved for glory. But, once more we repeat it, Mornas knew too well its value to waste his time and energy in trying to attain it. He had met illustrious men on the streets, whom the crossing sweepers pushed aside and vehicles bespattered with mud in passing; he had followed the funeral cortege of a celebrated artist, and ironically contemplated the green cloak of Member-of-the-Institute lying upon the pall like a cast-off garment, while the sparkling decorations made a heartrending contrast with the vulgar cloth. Fame had no value, and to leave a name after him did not suffice Mornas. He wanted to enjoy life while it lasted, and he would have given all the dreams of fame and love, all the romances and hopes of his early youth, for the riches he did not possess and which he envied.

He was a physician; he had passed in succession through all the grades of the career—ex-

terne, interne, and won his grade of army surgeon. He had thrown himself boldly into the *melée* with the thousands and thousands of others—surgeons without practice, professors awaiting public positions who throng Paris, their heads crammed with learning, their hearts swelled with hopes, and their stomachs empty. There were too many physicians in the great city. They could be counted by thousands. All the avenues were encumbered. Everywhere was an overplus of learning. Fashion's votaries, whose influence is more powerful than authority, when ailing went for treatment entirely to the few; and the human tide rushed on to the celebrities, leaving the beginners on the pavement like wrecks on a sandy beach. Mor-
nas experienced revolts of the flesh and cruel stings to his self-love. In his irritating poverty, he asked himself whether he should bury his chimeras in some hole in his native province, as in a forgotten grave, or if he should boldly put his shoulder against the door of success in Paris and force it open by dint of

energy. But the shoulder wearied at last, and still the door remained firm and unmoved. He lived on chance work, on patients picked up here and there, on the ills of poor devils, on the agonies of wretches; then, by degrees, he became disgusted with this work without honor, with those attics reeking with the odors of squalid misery and wretchedness, with the greasy stairways, ascended and descended without profit. His heart being elevated neither by the love of his art nor pity for the sufferings of mankind, he went to his unremunerative labors with ever increasing disgust and weariness, and continued to live on in his aimless way, with neither faith nor passion to stimulate him.

“Bah!” he exclaimed in his careless way, “what is the use of spending one’s life in this continual waiting? If there was only an opportunity for profit or notoriety—an epidemic, a war, a catastrophe of some kind. Then would come my chance! In one day I might become known and celebrated. In a year I might be rich! I would risk my

skin, it is true, but if I won I would fill it at least; while these empty days and long nights spent in endless waiting drive me to distraction. And yet, it is said the world is for them who have patience! Nonsense, it is rather for them who force it to listen to their ambitions."

He no longer used the title of doctor, and merely assumed it, now and then, as a retired soldier might assume the worn-out military coat from which the stripes and buttons have been cut.

At the time of his meeting with Lucie, he occupied a modest room in the Rue Racine, and spent his days wandering through the streets in search of what he termed an *occasion*. If he succeeded—it mattered little to him at what—he would secure the happiness of the honest couple who had slaved so hard on the little farm in the vicinity of Nice to educate him, and whose proudest boast was that their boy was a Parisian doctor. These humble people's ambition for their child had soared to

another sphere of action, beyond the narrow, monotonous world in which they had always vegetated, contented with their lot and without ambition for themselves, but with hearts filled with hopes for their only son. A laureate of the Lyceum! And so eloquent—eloquent enough to be a lawyer, a deputy, a minister, anything, in fact!

Yes; and Mornas was well aware of it. Eloquent with that fierce eloquence which, in public reunions, not only made the window-panes rattle, but aroused fierce passions and created doubts in consciences. A newspaper published on the left bank of the Seine had thus described him: “A voice of brass in a body of iron. Vigorous muscles in the service of a formidable will-power.” The flame of youth burnt in his eyes; but the heart was empty and already weary of struggling, and even his audacity was paralyzed by a sort of disgust of everything and a fierce hatred for the mediocrity to which he saw himself doomed. Poor and the son of poor people, he

feared but one disease, one leprosy—wretchedness!

“What a pity we cannot sell our souls to the devil, as in the old days!” he sometimes muttered with his low grating laugh. “That would make an opening, and besides—” and he laughed louder still—“it would be all profit, for the devil would be badly taken in in the bargain.”

Thus in this noisy world, where intellectual activity exasperated him, Jean earned a scanty livelihood, as best he could, by compiling notes from history and collecting information from libraries for a rich old miser, who was preparing a work on the origin of medicine, and thus purchased his fame cheaply, and by giving lessons to insolent children who confounded professors with servants in their scorn for good breeding. A physician without patients, a heart without faith, a brain without an ideal, a writer without a name and a lover without love, Jean Mornas dragged his pride and his repressed appetites through Paris, bitterly cursing his destiny as he went.

He was often seized by a mad desire to desert his cold, cheerless room, the dingy passages, through the thin partitions of which came the sounds of childish laughter and the songs of women, and go in search of nights devoid of nightmares and days free from struggle. He longed to return to that little garden where his mother sat spinning under the shade of the immense fig-tree and his father read the newspaper aloud.

What! return to his native place like a defeated soldier, go and bury himself in a provincial hole and treat the simple ailments of the peasants like an apothecary! To leave Paris, this ocean, for a pool! Jean Mornas struggled against these moments of weakness; and raising his head proudly, he would gaze at his reflection in the mirror for a few moments, then exclaim proudly:

“No, indeed! I was not born to live amongst such people—I need Paris, and I shall have it! After all, what am I wanting? The occasion only. Every man has his day.”

And he would add with a bitter laugh:

“His day—and his *mandarin!*”

But he lowered his voice whenever he said this, as if he feared to be overheard. Then, laughing at his fear, he would conclude:

“How stupid I am! If he is in China, he cannot hear me!”

CHAPTER III.

JEAN MORNAS' meeting with Lucie was now another motive or tie that prevented his return to the suburbs of Nice. For even had he finally concluded to spend his life vegetating in the province, the thought of the young girl would have sufficed to retain him in Paris. He had frequently visited the Rue Audran, drawn at first by curiosity and later by mere force of habit, and though he had never "offered sacrifice to sentiment," as he expressed it, with his usual irony, he now gradually felt a strange violent fascination for this young girl who, on her part, loved him madly, and experienced a profound admiration for this man who was so much her superior.

Yes, it was curiosity alone that had at first attracted Jean, or, perhaps, it was that instinctive need of romance, always found in a

man of twenty-eight, even in one of a "strong mind," such as Mornas pretended to be. And Jean gradually became a regular visitor at the little house whither he had escorted the young girl on the night of their first meeting; where he had repeatedly seen her and had been presented to her mother, a good honest woman who had been so happy to thank the one Lucie had spoken so much of, calling him:

"My poor child's protector!"

"Protector! —" protested Mornas. "I happened there by chance."

"By chance, indeed! by chance! There is no such thing as chance, Monsieur. And—you may laugh at me if you wish—I have placed a lighted candle before the statue of Saint-Pierre de Montmartre, in honor of the event," she retorted.

Laugh at her! No; this skeptic did not laugh at her simple piety! He found a strange charm in such simplicity. Moreover, to him faith or superstitions, of whatever kind, were merely cerebral manifestations, and he ac-

cepted them as facts. And then his vanity was flattered by that gratitude which, with the mother as with the daughter, reverted quite naturally into a form of admiration. Little by little, he had thus acquired a habit of going to Mme. Lorin's home.

It was a sort of recreation to him. He experienced an expression of freshness and comfort in this rude Parisian domicile, while Mme. Lorin, without however daring to say so aloud, began to find the young man's visits very frequent; but Lucie seemed so happy when Jean appeared in the little house of the Rue Audran that she could not find it in her heart to protest against his coming.

Jean, without anyone even suspecting the existence of this romance—which would have appeared incredible to the ordinary auditors of the paradoxes of the Mandarin—had thus made two parts of his life; one all of show and poses, of fatiguing struggles, of anger boldly proclaimed—that of the physician without patients, of the miner in search of a vein; the

other hidden, smiling, consoling, like that of the fiancé who adores his mistress and has no other anxiety than the color of the roses he shall provide for the evening. And, according to the character in which he appeared, he was no longer the same man. "There is now," he said to himself, "a Mornas of the right bank and a Mornas of the left bank." And, what also puzzled him, was that the former, who was as practical as a Yankee, did not look upon the latter as a perfect imbecile.

Mornas, the lover was, indeed, the direct opposite of Mornas the ambitious man. Nature frequently presents such contrasts. The man who, if the occasion had presented itself, would have driven thousands of people to revolt, became gentle and almost timid before the childish smile of this young girl. He now knew Mme. Lorin's existence; and that simple story, commonplace as the lives of all humble people, which he would have declared insignificant and wearisome if it had been related to him to awaken his sympathies, had more than once

brought a tear to his eyes while Lucie spoke of it.

“A foolish tear!” he would mutter to himself, impatiently.

Lucie’s entire past was dark, cold and painful; but further than a vivid recollection of the sorrows of her childhood she retained nothing but a gentle resignation; Mme. Lorin had taught her to bear all trials with meekness. She also had herself suffered cruelly. When a poor working girl, she had married Lucie’s father, a handsome young fellow and the only man she had ever loved, and for several years they had lived in comparative happiness. Then the husband—a machinist—who was a fluent talker, began to neglect the workshop for those noisy meetings where he delivered speeches which electrified his comrades, gradually deserting the little home circle and leaving his wife to what he termed her bigotries; and when he did chance to spend a few hours at her side he spoke of nothing but the great projects he had formed to deliver the people and emancipate

women from the load of wretchedness under which they suffered.

“But I assure you, I do not suffer, my dear Vincent!” she protested.

“Don’t tell me you do not suffer,” he retorted, emphatically. “When we meekly resign ourselves to the yoke, we are deserving of our chains!”

These fiery outbursts terrified the poor woman, who was naturally of a gentle, timid and profoundly pious character. But the feverish agitations of the period soon carried away Vincent Lorin, who was as bold and enthusiastic as his wife was retiring and timid.

One morning, in May, 1871, fourteen years before our story opens, he had gone out never to return. Though his fate had ever remained enshrouded in mystery, he was believed to have been shot down by the troops and buried in a trench with a number of his revolutionary companions. Mme. Lorin had had masses said for the repose of his soul at the Montmartre church, where they had been united; then she had sor-

rowfully taken up her burden and labored for herself and her child. And now that the hour had come when her daughter required her love and protection more than ever, the poor woman realized that her days were numbered, that she was slowly and surely dying, as kind old Doctor Pomeroy expressed it.

Doctor Pomeroy was an old physician who had resided in the neighborhood for many years, and was looked upon rather as a benefactor than a physician by the poor people of Montmartre. He had saved Lucie's life when a child and suffering from croup, and he was now attending the mother, to whom he frequently brought a few bottles of wine in his overcoat pocket—a way he had of settling his bills.

Jean Mornas had never met Doctor Pomeroy in Rue Audran. He was not displeased at this; he preferred that everybody, even the physician, should remain in ignorance of his visits to Mme. Lorin's domicile. He knew the Doctor by reputation, however; M. Pomeroy was not a man who had made a name through

any exceptional ability, but he was a type of simple devotion and true goodness. He had refused the cross offered him in acknowledgment of his heroic services during an epidemic, when he had risked his life for the benefit of his fellow creatures, and the students still spoke of the honest old man's reply.

"We do not decorate people for having merely done their duty," he had said. "When I do more than my duty, it will be time enough to mention rewards!"

"Then give him a prize for virtue, and speak no more of him!" Mornas would say, whenever anyone lauded the Doctor in his presence.

He was at last brought face to face with the Doctor, however--the day Mme. Lorin died. Death had at last claimed the poor woman; and one morning Lucie found herself alone. The little apartment of Rue Audran seemed immense to her, in the terrible void her mother had left behind her.

The nervous disease, from which the young

girl had suffered from childhood, was now greatly aggravated by the grief of this misfortune. Jean was at first somewhat alarmed; then time numbed the pain as fatigue weighs down an eyelid; and, little by little, that sort of slumber of our sufferings succeeded Lucie's mad despair; but Mornas' consolations, his tenderness and his love, had much to do with bringing about the relative calmness into which she was slowly gliding.

Jean did not reflect; he did not want to reflect on the position in which he had placed himself. Infatuated by the timid charm, by the very weakness of this child, he sought her almost every day and allowed himself to be carried along by this affection, as if by a new paradox, by a paradox in action.

Having no other friend, Lucie now confided everything to him: her sorrows and humble aspirations, as well as the dreams she had cherished of securing a life of ease and comfort for her beloved mother in her old age. Her plans were simple enough. She would have

gone into business some day, and would have worked incessantly for the loved one who was no more; for did not children owe this to those who had toiled continually for them? There existed in Lucie's gentle soul and humble spirit, simple impulses as refreshing as a clear bubbling spring. To please her, Mornas showed himself good, devoted and attentive. And though he concealed the flowers in his pocket that his companions might not laugh at his folly and weakness, he brought her violets, which she kept sacredly long after they had withered.

This halt in his life could not be of long duration with the ambitious man, however. Where would this love lead him? He had long faced this dilemma of stupidity, or folly, without coming to any decision. Folly consisted in associating Lucie with his life, in dragging her with him into the struggle, in uniting her to his wretchedness—or perhaps—in giving her his name. Stupidity consisted in throwing himself headlong into the future

with her, or rather in throwing her into that vulgar, sinister existence the end of which is—like the end of all faithless loves—when not the altar, the hospital!

She loved him enough, poor girl, to abandon herself to his will. With him, she would have lived in a sort of delicious torpor which would have seemed a happy dream after the sorrows of her childhood. She would not have reflected; she would not have suspected that when Mornas' caprice had passed away she might find herself face to face with the horrors of a downfall, having no other refuge than the pavement of the streets. As she adored Jean, it could scarcely occur to her that to be adored by him might be her ruin. She would have calculated nothing, feared nothing, and regretted nothing.

But Jean calculated for her.

He was infatuated, moved to the depths of his nature by this passion which astonished while it charmed him. When alone in the solitude of his room in Rue Racine, he found

a delicious pleasure in thinking of Lucie's gentle blue eyes, her blonde locks and the lively joy depicted on her features when she met him at the door. He had never dreamed of such a mistress; and his vanity was flattered by this love. But it was at this point that he summoned all his strength; resolved to cut short this romance which would certainly become an obstacle if allowed to last any longer.

“A man of intelligence should always be upon the alert, especially at a period when any moment may bring forth the supreme occasion,” he would say. “Then, what is the use of encumbering one's life with a useless love?”

Would he sacrifice Lucie to the satisfaction of an appetite that would be satiated by the most degraded of women? Or would he allow himself to be pierced more deeply by a love that was already too dangerous? No! a thousand times, no!—It were best to break off at once. Yes; break the chain before it had become riveted. Break it while he was still only

amusing himself with her; fly before he had fallen to the level of a vulgar stupidity, or to the madness produced by passion!

“It must be!” he would exclaim. “Lucie shall be a past vision, an apparition in my life! I have no time to squander on phantoms! I must sever the chain that binds me to her without delay!”

And as he walked on toward the Rue Audran, whither he had gone so often since his first meeting with Lucie, he would add:

“She will curse me, find me wicked and heartless—and she may, nevertheless, like Mme. Lorin, place a lighted candle in front of the statue of Saint Pierre de Montmartre—I love her and she loves me—and I have respected her, which is more than many an honest man would have done in my place!”

CHAPTER IV.

FOR more than an hour they had sat silently together in the dreary little room on the fifth floor of the house at Montmartre. As she bent over her work, Lucie raised her head from time to time to gaze timidly, yet admiringly at her companion; while Jean, with his eyes turned toward the narrow window, contemplated the gloomy spectacle of the neighboring houses with their blackened roofs and gray walls, and further off, the immense strand, Paris with its houses pressed together like grains of sand and its churches and domes enveloped in its own dense fog of smoke and bustle.

From below, from the depths of the streets hemmed in between the walks of the houses and stretching away like the narrow galleries of a mine, came the rumbling of carriages, the

murmur of the hurrying throng and the distant sounds of the great city. And yet, as he gazed listlessly at this active human beehive, tête-a-tête with this gentle girl working as silently as a convict in her cell and whose sensitive heart he was about to wound so cruelly, Jean felt more bitterly sad and alone than he had ever felt in his life. He now realized that he truly loved her, with a violence and passion he had never believed possible. Notwithstanding her twenty years, she possessed a childish candor which calmed and soothed his impetuous spirit. Then, her adoration of him was so eloquent, so touching, so infatuating, that it disarmed him. It was not displeasing to this popular orator, this tap-room brawler, this politician of to-morrow, who craved for a life of ease and gloried in the bravos of the drunken mob, to have for a confidante and admirer this little orphan who saw and loved no one in the whole world but him.

At the moment of breaking off, he experienced the agony of the wound he was about

to inflict and—ever-present sentiment—the egotistical anxiety at the sufferings *he* also would feel. And yet, it must be done; he must strike the blow, say farewell, and disappear. He might have ceased to come, he might have written, or even have left her without a word of explanation; but the heartrending spectacle of the scene he was about to precipitate possessed a strange fascination for him. The bitterness of the tears we cause to flow has in itself a sort of intoxication. Since he must suffer, Jean wanted, at least, to see how she also suffered. It was like imposing payment on the poor girl for the respect he had shown to her. Lucie's tears would repay the blunder of his platonicism. And while he contemplated the young girl as she sat opposite him, the sunlight caressing the bowed head on which the blonde hair seemed like fine threads of gold, he repeated to himself the question he had so often pondered upon in the solitude of his room:

“To what will this *liaison* lead you? To what?”

Then he added: "To a man such as you, the only affiliation possible is a union that will elevate you in your own eyes and in the eyes of the world. A Jean Mornas should not be influenced by the love of a working girl!"

Yes; but this working girl had a firmer hold upon his heart than he imagined. And at the moment of destroying this little romance, so chaste and sweet, which was destined to have no ending, Mornas experienced an unexpected sense of loss; as if this part of his life, the concealed and consoling part, had been dearer to him than the other, the life of parade and bombastic utterances.

Nevertheless, like a man who after examining the dagger hastily buries it in his body, he suddenly resolved to speak.

He told Lucie that for the future—yes, from that very day—she should not expect him. He had reflected. His frequent visits, which had become a cherished habit with him, were no longer possible. A necessity of fortune, of honesty, obliged him to avoid her

for the future and leave her mistress of her own life.

He spoke rapidly, with a sort of angry abruptness, as if he wished to dizzy himself.

A cry from Lucie stopped him.

“Never come back?—Never see me again? And why?”

“Ah! why indeed?”

She had allowed her work to slip from her fingers and fall to her feet; and with her arms hanging at her sides, she raised her poor, frightened eyes to his.

Then he tried to give, or to find valid reasons for his departure. He was not rich, and he could not entertain the idea of associating with his existence a woman as poor as himself. While courageous enough to bear the weight of the struggle, or, if need be, the yoke of wretchedness, alone, he would suffer too much at sight of the sufferings of a beloved being. How did he live? By harassing work, by revolting mental labors! An old scholar of the provinces, or rather a learned man who lacked

brains, had for a month past employed him at degrading work. Yes; this collector of useless scribblings, who late in life had been fired with the ambition of becoming a writer, who, though on the verge of the grave, dreamed of academic honors and was incapable of producing anything, had chosen as anonymous collaborator, as literary *gilder*, this Jean Mornas who had been recommended by one of his nephews, a fellow student at the university. He went frequently to Versailles, where this old man lived, and tortured his brain for the benefit of his miserly, fault-finding employer.

“Such are my life and my resources,” he went on. “As you see, it is not very promising!—I should have remained at my profession. But medicine disgusts me. I do not believe in it! Then, what?—I am a laborer like yourself, Lucie—yes, a laborer in ragged pantaloons and a threadbare coat, who possesses not even the certainty of being able to support by his work the one he shall choose for his companion!

This is what I am! And when one has no brighter outlook before him, he has no right to ask the one he loves to share his wretchedness! ”

But try as he might to blacken in the young girl's eyes that future which he portrayed so full of wretchedness and barren of comfort, she still endeavored to smile. Nothing of all this frightened her. She had slowly accustomed herself to Jean's love, and she had never tried to learn whether he was rich or how he lived. He appeared in her little home as the only being she loved, the only one she knew, almost. She knew that her mother had considered him good and worthy. Jean, in company with a few neighbors, had followed the poor woman's remains to the cemetery; and since then, it seemed to Lucie that he was one of her family. She did not ask herself how she loved him; she loved him, that was all; and the idea that he would some day announce, as he had done that day, that he would not come again, that all was over, that he was going away, never to return, had never

come to her; no more than the idea that he might marry her, that she should some day become his wife.

We rarely reflect on the cause of our happiness, especially when our fragile happiness is made up of a consoled misfortune. Until then, Lucie had merely allowed herself to live on, almost slumbering in this tenderness. And just as her pain had left the heart, Mornas' words abruptly re-awakened it. She had no very clear understanding of what his words meant; but she felt that everything about her was crumbling away and that solitude was to follow; a terrible solitude, without consolation this time. Her mother dead, Jean gone, what would become of her? In her distress she clutched at Jean with the despairing gestures of a drowning person; then fell back into her chair motionless, her haggard eyes fixed upon his face, unable to utter a single word of protest.

A strange trouble had come upon her, of which she was hardly aware. Had life died out

suddenly for her, the sensation of suffocation and emptiness would have been the same. It seemed to her that she had lost the sense of sight and that her heart had ceased to beat. A heaviness, a vague torpor took possession of her. And Jean, wishing to repeat to her that if he were leaving her it was through pure honesty, because an existence in common was impossible for them, had taken her hand and was gazing into her eyes, as if to carry away with him this last gentle, sorrowful glance, and let her read in his own glance the sincerity of his love and his pain.

For a moment they remained thus, gazing silently into each other's eyes. He also experienced a choking sensation, as if the sobs had gathered in his throat and could go no further; then he was seized by the mad, impulsive desire to throw himself at her feet, to clasp the golden head to his heaving breast, to press his burning lips to the beautiful sad eyes, to cry out in the ecstacy of a kiss: "No! no! I will not go! I will remain, I love you!

Let us brave life and all its miseries together. But let us not part, Lucie! Never!—Do you understand?—never!”

These words buzzed in his ears and dizzied his brain; yet he had the strength to hold them back from his lips and crush down the generous impulse of the moment.

To hold within his grasp this pure, innocent girl, who would have abandoned herself to his mercy had he but stretched out his arms, and yet to deny himself this cruel happiness, filled him with a feeling of mingled ecstasy and fierce voluptuousness; and his heat swelled with pride at the thought that he, the cynic and unbeliever, should be more conscientious than his fellow-men, who would have hurled this unprotected child to her ruin.

Yes, he would go away, and never come back.

After gazing thus for a long time at the young girl with an involuntary expression of passion, it suddenly seemed to him that he detected a strange fixity in her eyes; the pupils

were singularly dilated between the widely expanded eyelids.

Jean shrank back slightly, but Lucie remained motionless and rigid, hearing nothing and seemingly petrified. He then extended his hand and touched her, calling her name: "Lucie! —Lucie!—" But she made no reply and still retained that frightful immobility and cataleptic rigidity, reminding him of those poor girls on whom he had so often experimented at the hospital or at students' meetings. He wondered if this frail, exquisite child were not attacked by the nervous malady that so frequently assail those unfortunate creatures. As he still pondered over this puzzling problem, this cataleptic state seemed to give place to a sort of lethargy; the pretty golden head drooped gently on the left shoulder, and the weary eyes closed. Leaning over her, Jean breathed on the closed eyelids; there was a slight, nervous twitching of the heavy lids, and Lucie finally raised her timid eyes to him with an expression of tenderness and supplication—the wistful gaze

of the lamb conscious of the fate in store for him at the butcher's hands.

Jean felt a strange commotion within him as he encountered her beseeching eyes. He realized that he had not the strength to repeat what he had said to her a few moments before.

The complete prostration of this gentle girl lying before him terrified him. It seemed to him that he had given her a death blow. This temporary suppression of life, which, if observed in another, would have appeared as a simple phenomenon, curious to study, produced on him, in this instance, the effect of something sinister, criminal even. The idea of the dying lamb haunted him with persistent tenacity.

His only thought now was to calm Lucie, to console her. He assured her there was no truth in what he had said—nothing definite at least. It was but a test. Yes, a mere test. It might have been wiser to cease their relations, abandon their dream of a love without a culmination or without reason; but it were better, per-

haps, to put reason aside! They loved and would continue to love, since she desired it! He would not desert her! No, he would never leave her alone in her solitude. He would come back to-morrow, and nothing would be changed in their existence. She would not be left to struggle alone! No, no, he solemnly swore it!

“Are you reassured now, Lucie?” he asked, in conclusion.

He had delivered himself of these fine sentiments in his most persuasive and eloquent tone, though fully aware that he spoke falsely. “I must console her at any cost and gain time,” was his mental restriction, “then we shall see—I shall write, perhaps—I know not what I may do later, but I can not leave her in her present state!”

While he spoke, a joyful flush overspread Lucie’s pale features, like a wave of returning life; and in her blue eyes, which a moment before had been so tragic in their fixity, there appeared a smile of silent thanks, mingled

with an expression of such tenderness, such confidence, such complete *abandon*, that Jean shuddered, terrified by the passion which pierced him like a sword, impelling him to seize the young girl in his arms and press her to his heart.

CHAPTER V.

JEAN had found the strength to tear himself from Lucie's despairing embrace. He was returning home as free as when he had left it; the young girl had no right to reproach him or to demand anything from him. Yet, he was displeased with himself for not having broken his bonds, for still retaining this absurd love in his life.

"I, the hero of a platonic love!" he exclaimed, with a mocking laugh. "If my friends of the *Quartier* knew this, how unmercifully they would banter the Mandarin!"

Happily for Mornas' pride, they did not know it. Nor did any one else suspect it. Jean had kept this tender corner of his life as secret as if it were a defect. Indeed, he would have blushed at this excess of purity as at a vice. Still deeply agitated by the sen-

sation his abrupt determination had produced on Lucie, still seeing before him her motionless features and fixed eyes, he reëntered his apartment in Rue Racine with his brain filled with confused thoughts. The mystery surrounding these nervous attacks, of which he had seen many cases, had always attracted him strangely. Often, while at the hospital, or pouring over his books, he had asked himself what became of the freedom of thought, of the will, of responsibility in those disquieting cases. With Lucie, for instance, this was not the first time he had remarked a morbid excitement in her. On the night of their first meeting, he had been struck by the peculiar expression in her haggard eyes. But he had never suspected that this natural timidity bordered on disease. She had been frightened, but her terror had not paralyzed her on that night when she had been attacked by foot-pads on the deserted boulevard.

And what a physical impression, a corporal terror had not produced, the moral suffering of

a shock received in the midst of happiness had suddenly brought about. The nervous affection had abruptly manifested itself. Madame Lorin had often spoken of the nervous disease from which her daughter had suffered during infancy; but now, for the first time, Jean clearly perceived the symptoms of a malady he had formerly studied with curiosity, though the objects of his observations had hitherto been absolutely indifferent to him.

Lucie was then an invalid! It was therefore necessary that he should proceed with more precautions, and use more discretion in breaking off. At heart, he did not regret the necessity of putting off the hour of rupture with this paragon, so flattering to both his vanity and pride. The discovery served as a valid pretext for returning to Lucie; and he tried to convince himself that if he returned to this lonely little home, it was simply through his devotion to the girl and not in obedience to the dictates of his own will.

He finally concluded to let matters drift on

in their natural course, whatever the consequences might be. It was evidently a dangerous thing to trifle with the affections of a person afflicted thus; the sufferer might be driven to madness, or what was worse still, suicide. One could never tell what a woman might do if deprived of hope and consolation.

“And whose fault will it be if it ends badly?” he concluded, with his sarcastic laugh. “‘Hell,’ says the proverb, ‘is paved with good resolutions!’”

He threw himself on the bed immediately on his return from Montmartre; and while in that semi-unconscious state which precedes sleep, the incidents of the day returned to his mind in their regular succession. When he at last fell asleep, his dreams seemed like fragments dislocated from the living reality. Lucie appeared to him, her supplicating eyes turned wistfully to his. He attempted to fly; but she followed him automatically, with the rigid step of an animated statue. In this manner they walked swiftly down Rue Audran and Rue

Germain-Pilon, her dull, heavy step still resounding behind him and her icy touch chilling the nape of his neck.

When he awoke the next morning, his first thought was of the poor, lonely girl and he tried to find some pretext to see her again. Might not the attack of the previous day have left some trace, and might he not be of service to her? But no; he had left her quite restored, and she could have retained no worse recollections of the scene that had moved her so deeply than his own ridiculous visions of that night of distress. Moreover, M. de la Berthiere expected him.

M. de la Berthiere was the pretended savant who confided his notes to Jean for correction and compilation, who received him regularly twice each week in his study and labored with him in the preparation of a work on "Medicine among the Arabs," destined to perpetuate the glory of the provincial scholar, who had been fired—even on his paralytic bed—by his ambition for academic honors.

Jean's interviews with his employer were like conspirators' meetings. He was always introduced into this house on Rue Saint-Mederic with the greatest precautions, as if all Versailles were on the alert to discover the secret of the old man's erudition.

This Rue Saint-Mederic, so neat and white, with its low houses ornamented with gray balconies and bright colored blinds on the white walls, is one of the most silent streets of that city of silence. On one side, the horizon is bounded by a sheer cliff crowned with lofty trees that wave their boughs as sadly as cemetery willows, while on the other appear the grated windows of the barracks and the low walls of the gardens decorated with green vines and purple bunches of grapes. At the closing hour of school, childish cries, as joyous as the songs of birds, sometimes ring through the quiet street; but further than that, no other sound ever disturbs the stillness save the foot-falls of the rare pedestrians on the hard resounding pavement.

M. de la Berthiere was a retired Parisian magistrate, who possessed a violent passion for odd researches in occult sciences, therapeutics and ancient customs. As his last refuge, he had chosen a house with historic balconies and of showy elegance; the narrow doorway of which opened from the corridor into a garden which, with its perfumed atmosphere and flowery splendors, was the only inviting feature of the place.

The old book-worm received very few people in his chosen solitude, and the bolts on the narrow door were as securely drawn as those of a corridor in a cloister. Even when his nephews came to visit this old recluse, it was only after long waiting and many impatient protests that they succeeded in reaching his study. Jean, on the contrary, entered at once and without encountering any of those obstacles; the servants having received orders to admit him quickly, like one who should not be seen by the neighbors.

On entering the study, Jean would find his

employer stretched upon a couch, his emaciated form enveloped in a long dressing gown and his head covered with a skull-cap of black silk, which gave a still more cadaverous appearance to the shrunken features in which the small, restless gray eyes sparkled like those of a mouse. In this vast room, filled to the ceiling with books, the old man spent his days, his long bony hands caressing the piles of papers spread about on the couch, his only joy consisting in that pleasurable sensation which the touch of old paper gives to beings intoxicated with ink and distracted with literature. When he desired to communicate with his servants, the old man had recourse to an acoustic tube, the end of which lay upon the pillow beside him, always in reach of his lips.

Taking his seat at a desk, a few feet from the bedside, Jean would at once begin the reading of the manuscript compiled from the notes entrusted to him by the old man on his last visit. Then from amongst the papers on

the couch, he chose those which were useful for future work. These he took away with him and compiled, not always in a manner satisfactory to the one who was to sign them, however.

“Yes, that is not bad—not bad,” the old man would mutter; “but I would like my thoughts expressed with more force. Your expressions are weak, insipid—and my thought—”

His thought? Jean would glance up angrily at such an interruption; but he would quickly change the expressions to suit the old man, who gave vent to his satisfaction in childish laughter.

For this labor, which was so irritating to him, Jean received a pittance of one hundred and fifty franks a month. But for these few louis, which barely gave him bread, he sold his youth and his intelligence; he prostituted his mind to the caprices of another. And it was not without a sensation of revolt and degradation that he left the house in Rue Saint Mederic after his regular interviews with his detested patron!

On this day, however, he left in an indescribable state of mind. M. de la Berthiere, through an odd sentiment of self-forgetfulness, born of that moral complicity which bound the ambitious old *savant* to his manufacturer of fame, had allowed himself to be led into an unexpected confidence with Jean. As it was settling day with his secretary, he had—after some hesitation—requested the young man to take from among the books on a certain shelf a large encyclopedia, and bring him an atlas he would find in the space behind the volume.

“An atlas?”—said Jean.

“Yes, an atlas,” repeated the old man, “bring it to me.”

His small gray eyes were fixed attentively on Jean as he pulled the encyclopedia toward him and thrust his hand into the void between the other volumes on the shelf.

“Do you feel it there?—A large atlas?” he asked, anxiously.

Jean’s only reply was to exhibit an old atlas of the last century in a faded binding, and lay it on the couch beside the old man.

“This is one of my hiding places,” said M. de la Berthiere, with a laugh that rang in Jean’s ears for a long time after. “Yes,” he added, fixing his piercing eyes on the young man’s face; “a hiding place—It astonishes you, does it not?” Then turning over the yellow leaves with his bony hands, he drew forth a lot of bank notes, which he gathered into several piles and pinned together with pins from a cushion on the small table beside him.

Jean gazed in stupefaction at the spectacle of the old paralytic extracting bank notes from the pages of this antique atlas, gathering them into piles of uniform amount, and slipping them under his pillow. Then he chose two notes, one of one hundred franks and one of fifty, and tendered them to Jean, saying:

“Here is your month’s salary, Monsieur Mornas!”

M. de la Berthiere had placed twenty times that amount under his pillow, and yet the atlas, which Jean had held in his hands only a few moments before, was still distended like a con-

gested pocket-book. Then the old man begged his collaborator (he must have had great confidence in him) to place the atlas behind the encyclopedia, cautioning him, however, to be careful that the latter volume should not have the appearance of having been displaced.

“Be sure that it is exactly in line with the others,” he concluded, “for I would not have anyone but you suspect what is hidden behind it!”

Jean left the Rue Saint-Mederic after this extraordinary interview, his brain in a perfect whirl. The vision of this helpless man and the rows of big books behind which the old fool hid his money, was continually before his eyes. Mad wild ideas and morbid temptations crowded through his brain. He incessantly repeated to himself that with the money hidden away between the yellow pages of the old atlas, he could live; live happy, or, at least, tempt fortune by risking an electoral candidature in some obscure province—for the right of making laws is paid for like any other commodity

—and enter the human struggle with munitions at least. “The munition required is money,” he said. And there was money, a great deal of money in that little study on the first floor of the house in Rue Saint-Mederic, where M. de la Berthiere spent his days and where he alone entered unchallenged, stealthily as an accomplice; the old man’s vanity being stronger than his fears or his prudence.

A sort of mocking hallucination took possession of him at this thought. The old man’s couch and the innumerable books on the shelves seemed filled to overflowing with piles of bank notes. Even in his dreams the vision pursued him, and he would start up in the middle of the night, his throat parched, his body in a fever; and, in the shadows of his little room, he seemed to hear a sarcastic, penetrating voice exclaiming:

“Behold the mandarin—the famous mandarin, you have so long sought!”

This quickly became an atrocious obsession, a fixed idea that was frightfully irritating.

Evidently, Jean had heretofore used the bravado of the mandarin as a glistening weapon in the tournament, as a pose before his admiring auditors, and he now looked upon it as a cruel irony, a dangerous chance that fate should have, in a manner, thrown into his hands the paradox in tangible form, and placed this atrocious temptation at his finger-tips.

This idea forced itself into his brain with the penetration of a heated iron. He felt himself, as it were, perforated by this external reflection as by an auger. Night and day, this possibility of fortune pursued him like a haunting vision. He continually repeated to himself that riches were there, within reach of his hand, the riches which had always escaped him, the riches which had always receded from his grasp, notwithstanding all his efforts—And he would clench his fists until the nails were buried into the flesh, muttering —“ And he is rich! —”

This temptation followed him with increasing persistency. His slumbers were peopled

with nightmares of eternal sameness, with dreams of maddening mockery, of strange buffoonery, in which the old man appeared to him in a costume of yellow silk, with a crystal button sewed on his black skull-cap, and gazing at him with a meaningless smile, like the figures on Chinese porcelain. Sometimes, M. de la Berthiere assumed the costume of a mandarin on an umbrella, and the impression of the dream was so vivid that Jean distinctly heard the old paralytic's dry, hacking cough. Then he would awake with a start and remain for a moment seated upright in his bed, suffocating, the blood rushing to his temples, and a sound like the ringing of bells resounding in his ears. And still, as always, whether awake or asleep, the eternal vision of the old man pinning together the piles of bank notes appeared before him.

Then all he had so often repeated in his violent harangues, in the sinister scoffings of his boasted Bohemianism—the necessity of audacity, the inutility of patience, the stupidi-

ty of honesty, the absurdity of remorse—all returned to Mornas with terrible precision, taking form and resolving itself into the formula of the problem: “To kill the mandarin!”

Yes, this M. de la Berthiere was indeed the mandarin, a mandarin who inhabited Versailles, and not Peking, but he was nevertheless a useless being, an ugly, broken, fragment of life, buried and congealed in his egotism, dragging out a useless existence in suffering, while thirsting for glory with one foot in the grave; a miser who hoarded a fortune which served neither to relieve the sufferings of a stricken fellow-creature, nor to dry the tears of the poor.

“Why should he be rich, and not I?” Jean would cry out. Then he would add impatiently: “Ah! if I only possessed what he has lying useless between the pages of that old book!—”

This thought dazzled him. He could feel that twitching of the lips which a thirsty person experiences at the sight of water. “The

mandarin!—Fortune!—Riches! rang continually in his ears.

And without even considering the possibility of the accomplishment of what automatically fired his brain, he began by degrees, with a sort of involuntary labor of unconscious cerebration, to trace out the surroundings of the crime.

He could easily gain access to M. de la Berthiere's study. The doors, which were closed to all others, were open to the anonymous collaborator. It was even probable that the very servants were ignorant of the name of the mysterious personage who came to Versailles from time to time. He was known merely as Monsieur's secretary. M. de la Berthiere would never have permitted anyone to learn the name of the one who came to bring him the materials of his future glory.

While thus alone with M. de la Berthiere in the study on the first floor, who was to prevent him from searching those books wherein, as in certain fairy tales, it seemed to him there were untold treasures scattered about every-

where. M. de la Berthiere might of course call for assistance through his acoustic tube. But by simply pushing the tube beyond the reach of his hand, the paralytic would be completely in Jean's power. He might cry out, perhaps, but his cries would not be heard.

But if they were overheard?

Then—ah! then—the servants would rush in, he would be seized, given into the hands of the police, taken to prison, lost—

No, decidedly no; he must not habituate himself to the thought of such a thing. And Jean endeavored to think no more of it. For a few hours he succeeded in forcing it from his mind; then the persistent idea returned, and the young man began once more to plan a possible attempt with as much patient perseverance as if he were seeking the solution of a difficult problem.

On his next visit to the house on Rue Saint-Mederic, Jean was forcibly struck by the silence of the street. It seemed so far removed from the rest of the world!—The isolated po-

sition of M. de la Berthiere's house added still more to the possibilities of the temptation. And when Mornas heard the valet announce him as "Monsieur's secretary," he experienced a sense of further security. It was evident that the servants did not know his name. But then, they would certainly find his name in some of the notes scribbled by the old paralytic; and besides the old man's nephew could tell all—

When the valet had closed the door behind him, Jean stopped motionless in the middle of the study. His gaze was fixed on M. de la Berthiere stretched upon his narrow bed; and it seemed to him that the old man was even more emaciated and yellow than usual. This word—"yellow"—involuntarily brought to Jean's mind the incessant idea, the absurd, the tenacious idea of the mandarin. "The mandarins are of a yellow race," thought Jean, as he stood contemplating the old man, who, after a moment of silence, said, in a husky voice:

"You must come a little closer. I have had an accident since you were here last."

"An accident!" echoed Jean.

"Yes, my dear Monsieur," replied M. de la Berthiere. "I do not see you! No, I can not see you!"

A new affection had indeed rendered the paralytic temporarily blind. A sort of congestion had invaded his eyes; and the shriveled old man, lying there like a withered mummy, could no longer watch Mornas with his sharp, mouse-like eyes.

"The physician assures me that I shall recover my sight in a couple of weeks," went on the old man. "Are you of his opinion?"

Jean gave some reassuring explanations, though strongly doubting the possibility of recovery from a new shock in this worn-out body; the bodily infirmities having already invaded the mind.

His replies came from the lips only, however, for his thoughts had wandered elsewhere. Should the temptation of taking the bank notes

occur to anyone, the old man could not even see the guilty person who stole them, was his uppermost thought.

It was no longer necessary to kill the mandarin to become rich—Merely robbing him would suffice.

Thrusting this ignoble thought abruptly from him, Mornas approached M. de da Berthiere's bedside, and read him the chapter he had compiled since his last visit. It was entitled: "Observations on the philosophy of Arabian physicians," The author, in his black silk skull-cap, listened attentively, nodding approvingly now and then, and, extraordinary to say, he was neither cross nor insolent on that day. Through the open window a ray of sunlight penetrated into the study, brightening the faded gilding of the old volumes, and stopping even longer than on the others on the title of the large encyclopedia that Jean had removed to secure the atlas on his last visit.

And, instinctively, the young man's eyes were attracted to those long rows of enormous

volumes, behind which his imagination showed him piles of bank notes which he might, with a little audacity—

But he abruptly cut short his reflections at this point; and forcing himself to resume the yoke of his labor, he continued to read to M. de la Berthiere, striving to think of nothing but the phrases which he annotated without comprehending their sense; while his thoughts, fired by wild, ardent desires, searched behind the old volumes for the untold treasures concealed there.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS visit to the Rue Saint-Mederic only seemed to intensify the violence of the temptation which beset Jean. In the evening he went to Rue Audran, hoping to ease his troubled mind by the spectacle of the young girl's gentle resignation and serene smile. But he found her ill and extremely nervous; the malady of other days, the affection that had afflicted her from infancy, seemed to have returned under a new form, and a deeper sadness seemed to have invaded her. As he contemplated Lucie's pale features, the fixed idea penetrated deeper and deeper into his brain; uniting in a sudden reflection, and in a coincident thought, the old man he had just left and this young girl whose strange malady had often disturbed his mind since he had seen her lying in that cataleptic state before him.

Jean had made a special study of those strange nervous diseases, which transform into a passive instrument the human being endowed with will and conscience. He had often experienced the keen enjoyment of a scoffer and unbeliever, in kneading, as it were, at his pleasure, the brains of those creatures who under the spell of hypnotism, became simply instruments which he directed at will. It had been a refined pleasure to this skeptic to seek to discover what had become of the will power when a hysterical subject obeyed the wishes he imposed; laughed, wept, prayed or sang, according to his command. He also frequently asked himself if an unused, utilizable force did not exist in these very maladies; and if one day some superior genius would not succeed in the application of these human machines to some practical purpose. In his famous harangues, which half resembled the ravings of a dreamer and half the proclamations of an army general, he had even built up a whole *Theory of the Will* on these magnetic mysteries. Comparing the human

will to electricity, he claimed it might be used for the transmission of great efforts and laborious tasks—to transport volition to a distance like a current of electricity or like light.

And for several days—since his last visit to M. de la Berthiere—since that evening spent with Lucie when he had been so much alarmed by her odd emotion, he had linked the young girl's personality to his theoretic reflections, placing in the quasifantastic frame in which was “the mandarin,” this child who did not even suspect that there was a M. de la Berthiere in the world.

His reflections on this subject finally brought him to the conclusion that Lucie's sensitive and impressionable nature could easily be made to obey the suggestions imposed by an exterior dominating will; that he, if he wished it, could compel her to undergo whatever tests he desired to impose upon her. And he quickly acquired the proof of his deduction. Smilingly at first, as if merely in jest, he had exercised his influence over this gentle creature, whose will-power

had totally deserted her at the first hypnotic test; and, as he had expected, she had become what professional charlatans called, a "docile subject" under his experimenting will.

Having persuaded himself that these experiments would be of service to him in his studies, Jean continued his tests upon Lucie, who lent herself to his caprices with the best grace imaginable. Before long he had reached a stage when by the simple pressure of his fingers upon the closed eyelids, she fell into one of those lethargic, or cataleptic states, which quickly succeeded each other in her. It began with a shudder, immediately followed by a quivering of the entire body in which was manifested that sort of broken, incoherent language, which science compares with the senseless babblings of chloroformic slumber. When thus under the sway of his will, Mornas would abruptly give her orders, suggest strolls in an imaginary garden, where she gathered invisible flowers, uttering cries of delight; or again, by the power of his thoughts, he would transport her to a

theater where, listening to music that did not exist, she moved her head regularly, to and fro, as if keeping time with the orchestra.

Lucie always came out of this unconscious state with a sudden start. She leaped, as it were, in one bound into the waking state without any visible lassitude; retaining, however, imprinted in her brain, the thoughts, the ideas, the suggestions that Mornas had impressed there as easily as would yielding wax into which he had pressed a seal.

Though half frightened at the amazing power of this human force, which he could so freely exercise, Jean felt himself decidedly tempted—frightfully tempted—by the possibility which he possessed to undertake, with Lucie as involuntary accomplice; what he termed a bold expedition.

“What have I been searching for?” he asked himself, as he gazed about him at the bare walls, the narrow iron bedstead, and the blackened table, in his wretched room. “What have I lacked? The occasion. Well, here it

is at last, that occasion I have so long sought in vain. If I profit by it—and I would be very silly if I did not—I will not even be obliged to kill the mandarin. I have merely to make use of the opportunity the meeting with him has brought forth!”

At first these ideas were jumbled in Jean's mind like a confused mass; then they gradually assumed a clearer, more alarming fixity. The *problem*, as he called it, appeared to him in a clear manner, as if traced on a blackboard with the precision of a mathematical theory. In M. de la Berthiere's study, in that house at Versailles, there was what might be termed a sort of gold mine, where an audacious man might boldly work. Yes, there, in those old books, hidden by the old miser, who did not even know their amount, were piles of bank notes amounting to a sum which to most men would be a fortune; but which to Mornas represented moreover the commencement of his liberty, the satisfaction of his ambition, a life of freedom; and freedom—with whom? With the woman

he loved. For why should he not marry Lucie if he were rich? The only thing he dreaded was wretchedness. And when that fear was once removed from his life, there would be no reason to deter him from sharing his existence with the young girl.

And over there, in that house in the Rue Saint-Mederic, he could find the end of this misery—But he could obtain it by one means only—Robbery! The word had caused him to shudder when it had appeared to him for the first time in all its hideous reality. But, was he, Jean Mornas, who professed to scoff at everything, now to be turned from his purpose by a single word?

No, decidedly. But the risk of being seen, of being suspected, of being caught, must be avoided.

But, after all, robbery was something cowardly, debasing, Mornas felt that his fingers would refuse to act at the moment of committing it. He had an instinctive horror of the material act. He could sympathize with the

corsair who pillaged, but not the sneak-thief who robbed by stealth.

Then his fixed idea brought him back to the contemplation of a combination, the learned irony and complicated novelty of which pleased him and incited him as a challenge.

What was most tempting in the old question which he habitually treated with the skill of a professor in paradox;—the question of a mandarin—was that he might be killed from a distance, and without even leaving a stain on his hands. The impossibility of the moral problem, so often set up, had now disappeared, thanks to science; the very reality of it gave him the power to strike at a distance; to command the obedience of a human being by pressure on the brain, as on an electric button. He had merely to will it and say: “I wish it!” to have his desire executed.

And by whom? —By Lucie whom he adored, whom he dreamed of associating with his existence when he had obtained the riches he longed for.

She had no suspicions of the tempest that surged through Jean's brain. She would never suspect it. If he desired it, she would submit—in an hypnotic state—to the idea he suggested; she would obey as a slave, she would accomplish, when called upon, whatever order he would give her. This suggestion, which places the disarmed, passive, tamed human being unreservedly in the hands of the one who dominates him, this suggestion which might be employed to a good purpose by imposing on degraded souls or, on savage spirits ideas of honor and of piety which, little by little, would impress themselves there, and perhaps modify the morbid or wicked spirit of the human being—this suggestion, of which Mor-nas knew all the alarming phenomena—why should he not make use of it to get possession of the money concealed by the old miser in the recess behind the old volumes in his study?

It seemed to him that thus set up as a problem to be worked out, the robbery lost all its vileness. The crime was transformed into an

experiment. To Mornas, there was something like a scientific research in the culmination of this infamy. To begin with M. de la Berthiere's ferocious egotism was not a sentiment to disarm Jean. Could he feel any remorse in robbing a man whose useless wealth was to go to nephews who hated and scorned him? What did a few bank notes less in the total of the old man's estate matter to people who were already rich and whose only claim to M. de la Berthiere's fortune consisted in bearing his name, who had barely seen him five or six times in their lives?

While to Jean a package of these bills was the enfranchisement, the commencement of life! Ambitious as he was, he could brave and at the same time enjoy life, instead of dragging out a wretched existence in humiliating labor. To what eminence might he not attain, if he only possessed the lever of money at a time when audacity opens all doors!

"And the old paralytic will not be even aware of it," he would say to himself, with a

chuckle, "No, he will not even know that there are a few bank-notes wanting from amongst the yellow pages of his old books. And I!—Ah! What a revenge!"

Then the recollection of all his hatreds returned to him, all his baffled ambitions, all his unappeased appetites, all his lost youth; of the long days of despair when he had, more than once, walked through the snow in ragged shoes, muttering to himself that,—if he had courage—he could live peacefully as a peasant, over there in that sunny land, beside the blue ocean.

Courage indeed! to have turned back now would have been cowardice!

He had often repeated to himself, in those days of dark distress, that his hour would surely come. And who could say that fate was not at that very moment pointing to it on the dial of the time-piece in front of him? It was perhaps about to strike! Ah!—riches, or if not riches, the possibility at least of becoming rich and the joy of being free! The dream almost

assumed tangible form in his eyes. It was there within reach of his hand—There! Or rather over there!

“This is my plan:” he said aloud. “I will simply say to Lucie: ‘You shall go to the Rue Saint-Mederic at Versailles, I will hand her a letter which will secure her admission to the old man’s study. She will be alone—The man is paralyzed, and that congestion in the eyes has made him temporarily blind. With one gesture, she will thrust aside the acoustic tube; and, from behind the large encyclopedia, she will draw forth the old atlas and take possession of the bills within it. She shall take them all. And in two hours, from one train to another, I will be rich!—Rich!’”

Yes, it was very simple. It seemed to Mor-nas that this expedition was the easiest thing in the world. He ordered, Lucie obeyed, she returned—All was said and done!

It did not seem possible to him that any obstacle should present itself. He experienced a sort of pride, filled with bravado, in declaring

that what he thus decreed, might and should be accomplished whenever he desired, as if the human *I will* had suddenly become a mandate of divinity.

But before going any further, he wanted to convince himself once more that Lucie submitted completely to the impressions that might be suggested to her. The young girl had become his absolute slave whenever he placed her in a somnambulistic state; but Jean desired to take all measures that prudence could suggest before attempting the combined deed. He accordingly set off for Rue Audran. Lucie was seated near the fire working, and was overjoyed to see him. The weather was intensely cold; and through the windows could be seen the roofs of the neighboring houses, covered with a layer of snow that glistened coldly under the gray sky. His coming to see her from such a distance in such inclement weather, she considered as a proof of his great love for her. It did not require much attention on his part to make the poor girl happy.

Leaving her work, she placed a chair in front of the coke fire in the chimney, that he might dry his wet shoes; and then, fixing her eyes upon his face, she contemplated him with a kind and devoted glance; while he, his hands resting on his knees, seemed lost in thought, as if turning over lugubrious ideas in his curly head.

Then she inquired how he had spent his time since she had last seen him two days before, and if he were working. She advised him to avoid working too hard; she had suffered from a sick headache during the last two days as a consequence of overwork. But happily she had met Doctor Pomeroy while on her way to the shop; and he had prescribed quinine; which had done her so much good!

“And if you are ever troubled with a sick headache, Jean—”

She stopped abruptly, and broke into a gay laugh.

“How stupid I am!” she exclaimed. “I always forget that you are a physician!”

“Or nearly so!” said Mornas, in his sarcastic tone.

“You are a *savant* at least,” she rejoined, with a bright smile. “Ah! I am quite sure of that, for I have read it in a newspaper.”

“A newspaper!” he echoed.

“Yes, a newspaper,” she repeated, as she drew from the drawer of her work table a carefully folded copy of an obscure sheet published in the Latin quarter, and pointed to a biography of the *Mandarin*, written by one of Jean’s comrades. The article was one of praise, wherein the writer lauded Jean’s eloquence and erudition, of which the great public was still in ignorance.

The young man shrugged his shoulders as he glanced at the article in question.

“Yes,” he said, as if speaking to himself; “yes, so it is! I have accomplished nothing as yet; and behold my biography is already published in the newspapers. We shall soon be raising statues to unknown poets. Come—” and his voice rang forth like a trumpet sound-

ing a charge—"it is another reason to act and to exist!"

Turning to Lucie he inquired how this newspaper had come into her possession.

"Oh! by a mere accident," she replied. "It was wrapped about some work; and in opening the package, your name caught my eye and I kept it. That is all."

Mornas then desired to know what she had said to Doctor Pomeroy. Had she spoken of him, Mornas, to the old physician?

"Why, no," she replied, "we did not speak of you. But why do you ask?"

"Because it is unnecessary to mention me to anyone, until the day—"

He stopped, and involuntarily glanced at Lucie with an expression of genuine love, of suppressed passion that brought a flame into his black eyes. She understood what he wished to say. Until the day when he would be free to love her, to marry her, to carry her off wherever he wished, to the end of the world!

She was fully persuaded that this day would

yet come! She had a blind confidence, a profound faith in the young man's future. She knew he was ambitious, and his very ambitions pleased her. She felt that he was tortured by his humble position, by the miseries he was forced to undergo, and she would gladly have sacrificed herself—she would have spent nights in labor to have lessened his sufferings. Whatever he commanded to be done, she did. She would not have dared to speak of him to anyone through fear of displeasing him. She had not even given his name to the *concierge* of the house.

“Why should I speak of you to Doctor Pomeroy?” she continued, “although I consider him rather as a relative than a physician. I was delighted to see him again. He has not grown any older!”

“He was born old,” muttered Jean.

Doctor Pomeroy was indeed as thin, as active and as devoted as ever; his hair was as long and as white, and his interest in the poor as intense as before. When Lucie had re-

marked that he had not changed, the good old man had replied, with a paternal smile:

“So it is; my child; work is the best preservative!”

Jean shook his head dubiously at this assertion, and, fixing his eyes on the tips of his steaming shoes, said:

“This Doctor Pomeroy is worthy of the Montyon prize! Of the practitioner *Little Blue Mantle*! How fortunate these virtuous people are—they preserve their virtue and their youth at the same time!”

And his voice assumed those harsh vibrations which sometimes frightened Lucie.

Suddenly he arose as if to leave; then, turning abruptly toward the young girl, he took her hands and stood for a moment in front of her, his eye lids expanded, his gaze fixed intently upon her staring pupils.

These mute glances, which he thus forced into her eyes, made her shudder with a sort of constrained uneasiness that was not entirely devoid of an odd sensation of sweetness. She

willingly abandoned herself to this tender magnetism which Jean exercised over her, and with a contented smile allowed him to fascinate her. Placing his right hand upon her eyelids, Mornas pressed gently on the closed eyes; and with strange rapidity, Lucie's blonde head fell upon her shoulder like a child overcome by slumber, and this living, thinking, and usually conscious being became abruptly transformed into an automaton.

Lucie at once ceased to think for herself; Jean's mind had completely overpowered hers. All the hallucinations which his will forced upon her brain became temporary realities to her. She laughed when he told her to do so. When he said: "You are two years younger than you suppose, and your mother is still alive. She is there, look!" the poor girl immediately precipitated herself in the direction indicated, to embrace her beloved mother. Decidedly, she submitted to the suggestions imposed with frightful alacrity. But what Jean wanted to know was whether in Lucie, as in the majority

of such subjects, the suggestion survived the awakening and continued in the conscious state; that is to say, whether the young girl, when awake, would execute, without even suspecting the force to which she obeyed, the order he had given her when asleep.

This incredible phenomenon, Jean had no doubt, would produce itself in Lucie as in all those hysterical persons whom he had so often hypnotized. But the problem whom he was working out was formidable enough to warrant him in taking all precautions if he wished to carry it to a victorious solution.

In pursuance of this plan, he said to the still unconscious Lucie:

“I am going to awaken you in a minute. And to-morrow, do you understand? to-morrow at ten o’clock precisely, you will meet me on the steps of the Odeon! —Do you understand? To-morrow!”

“To-morrow,” replied the young girl, repeating his words like an echo.

“At ten o’clock!”

“ At ten o’clock ! ”

“ Very well,” he resumed. “ You will hand me this ”—he held a pocket-book before her—“ which I will leave in the drawer of your work-table—in the drawer, do you understand ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And the precise hour ? ”

“ Yes.”

Then he breathed quickly on Lucie’s closed eyelids and she awoke at once, rubbing her eyes and trying to smile, but with a vague expression of trouble and anxiety portrayed on her features. She did question him on what he had said to her during her slumber, however; and perhaps she was not even certain that she had slept.

He left her almost immediately, without reminding her of anything. He merely said that he could not tell when he would come again; but promised to come soon, as soon as it was possible.

“ To-morrow ? ” she asked.

“To-morrow, perhaps,” he replied, and he left her smiling.

Mornas spent the entire evening repeating to himself that, if Lucie submitted in a waking state to the suggestion he had dictated to her during her hypnotic sleep, if she came to the meeting-place at the hour fixed, nothing, no, nothing, could prevent her from executing the more important order he was to give her later. And after a restless night, he awoke the next morning after having again dreamed of old M. de la Berthiere, dressed in the fantastic costume of the autocrat of the yellow country.

CHAPTER VII.

A few minutes before ten o'clock Jean arrived at the foot of the steps leading up to the Odeon, and eagerly scanned the faces of the pedestrians who hurried along the snow-covered walk.

Five minutes to ten, three minutes to ten, and still Lucie had not appeared.

But at precisely ten o'clock he uttered an involuntary cry of joy as he caught sight of the young girl coming rapidly across the muddy square in the direction of the place he was standing.

When she perceived Jean, she stopped and gazed at him in astonishment, as if taken by surprise.

"Ah! it is you, Lucie!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I," she said, with a smile.

"What chance has brought you here? And,

what are you doing in this quarter, at this hour?" he asked.

"I come," she replied, a half frightened smile again overspreading her features. "I come to bring you the pocket-book you forgot in a drawer—in my rooms,—yesterday!"

And she tendered the pocket-book to Mornas who took it, feigning to not understand her.

"Thank you—" he said. "But who told you to bring this pocket-book to me?"

"Who told me?"

"Yes."

"No one—I don't know—But I knew that I was to bring it to you to-day, at ten o'clock—and to this very place."

"What! here in front of the Odeon?"

"Yes, in this exact spot."

"Ah! And suppose you had not found me here?"

"Oh! I was to find you here—I was certain of finding you—And besides, as I tell you, I had to come—I was forced to come."

"Why so?"

“Something told me to do so.”

She spoke with a sort of gentle decision which confused her a little, as if ashamed of being unable to give a better explanation of the obsession to which she had submitted, of the irresistible impulse which, without visible cause, had impelled her to carry to Mornas—and to this very spot—this pocket-book, which she might have returned on his next visit to Rue Audran. It was a something stronger than herself, she explained. She had been forced to obey the idea that she must be there to meet him, at ten o'clock precisely.

When he insisted and repeated his question: “Who ordered you to come?” she invariably replied with the same confused expression:

“Who?—I do not know—No one—Myself, perhaps—It is very strange; but I could not resist coming!”

Jean was overjoyed at his triumph. It was easy enough to renew this aimless experiment by boldly dictating to Lucie the rôle he had assigned her in the drama he had so skill-

fully planned. It consisted simply in putting into action the series of events he had so carefully combined. But when? Now, at once! He had waited long enough; he had endured too many days of wretchedness to delay any longer. The moment had come when he must utilize the mandarin as a stepping stone, and boldly take advantage of the advances made by fortune.

“You must not be faint-hearted, Jean!” he exclaimed. “It will serve you nothing to play the rôle of Joseph!—and besides, you have not even the coat to leave in the hands of the robbers! To arms, Mornas!”

That very night he went to Lucie’s apartments. He hypnotized her as he had done on previous occasions; and, when the poor girl was soundly asleep, he proceeded slowly to impress upon her mind the fixed idea, which she could not escape, which would dominate her and impel her to carry out his commands the next day; which would be stronger than her honesty and her conscience; the obsessing idea against

which she would perhaps try to struggle—as the bird flutters its wings under the fascination of the reptile which it cannot evade—but which she would nevertheless put into execution, surely, mechanically, and at the time stipulated, as she had, without knowing why, brought the pocket-book to the place indicated by him. Grasping her firmly by the hands he held her powerless under his superior will, while he dictated step by step the tragic programme she was to follow. She would take a train at the Saint-Lazare station, at one o'clock; she would be in Versailles in three-quarters of an hour. There she would take the tramway which passed before the entrance to the station, and go in the direction of the *Quartier Saint-Louis*. She would ask the conductor to stop at Rue Saint-Mederic, and M. de la Berthiere's house was the fourth from the corner on the right-hand side of the street. He repeated the number to her twice, that it might be indelibly imprinted in her memory. She would ring, and insist on being admitted to the

old man's study. She would say—without giving any name—that she came with “What Monsieur expected,” and present a letter given her by Mornas, in which he begged M. de la Berthiere to admit, secretly, the person whom he sent with a corrected chapter of his manuscript.

This secret, which the pseudo-scholar desired to conceal, would no doubt prove a *sésame* to the study, the famous study where each hidden book was perhaps a sort of treasure box to the old miser. If, by chance, M. de la Berthiere, who never received anyone except his physician, should be engaged with a visitor, Lucie would wait. But it was probable that she would be ushered into the old paralytic's presence without delay; and the moment the latter learned her business, he would certainly lose no time in ordering that he be left alone with Jean's messenger.

And once alone with him, Lucie would obey like an automaton the suggestion Mornas had imposed upon her.

“Listen, and retain carefully what I'm going

to tell you," repeated the young man, in a tone which he endeavored to render severe. "M. de la Berthiere can call for help; he must not do so! He is blind, at least temporarily so. He can neither see nor stir. You will remove the acoustic tube from his pillow so that he cannot use it; and, noiselessly, from behind volumes IV and V of the *Encyclopedia*—the *Encyclopedia*, do you understand?"

"The *Encyclopedia!*" repeated Lucie in a firm voice, as if imprinting each word in the depths of her memory.

"Behind volumes IV and V."

"Volumes IV and V.—very well!"

"You will find an atlas, bound in faded leather. You will take it. There must also be other books beside it which contain bank-notes—but I am not sure—do not waste any time in searching elsewhere. The atlas, the atlas alone, you understand? The atlas is what you seek. You must empty it of all the bills it contains; or, if you have not time to do that, slip it under your shawl and replace the volumes of the ency-

clopedia exactly as they were—is it understood?”

Motionless and in her petrified attitude, the poor girl made no reply; but her entire countenance was convulsed as if by interior suffering, it expressing a struggle of conscience and a poignant distress. It was the inevitable insurrection of her personality struggling against the obsession of his orders, as a sleeping person struggles against the evil temptations of certain dreams. There was at that moment in Lucie, a duality of persons: the honest girl and the hypnotized victim—the one revolting at the horror of the temptation presented to her; the other controlled entirely by Mornas' will and submitting passively.

Jean clearly realized the struggle going on within her in the agonized expression of her pale features; and seizing her hands once more, he said in a harsh, almost menacing tone:

“You must do this, do you understand?—you must do it!”

She made no reply, but a shudder like that produced by an electric shock shook her entire body, and her features assumed the pained expression seen in the faces of martyrs.

“I desire it!” went on Mornas, firmly. “I desire it! Do you understand? I desire it, and it must be done!”

Then he added, for it is necessary to give honest reasons to these beings, even when thus spell-bound, to make them act.

“The money which you shall find there, was stolen by that man. It will not be a robbery to take it from him; only a mere act of restitution.”

After a moment of silence, so profound that he could hear Lucie’s heart beating as if in a crisis of palpitation, he said again:

“You will do it?”

“Yes,” replied Lucie, in a faint voice.

“You will do so, in spite of your possible hesitations, in spite of all obstacles?”

“Yes,” she replied again.

“And when it is done, you will bring me,

at my lodgings, the atlas or the bank-notes it contains?"

"At your lodgings?" she asked inquiringly.

"Yes, in Rue Racine, and that very night?"

"Yes," she repeated once more.

As she continued to reply to his questions, Lucie's voice gradually became firmer, as if the strength to struggle had abruptly given place within her to an eager desire to obey.

Then he awoke her suddenly; and after the first moment of surprise and agitation, the gentle smile returned to her lips and the expression of profound tenderness came back into her calm blue eyes. Then without the least recollection of the order Mornas had dictated to her, and which at the appointed hour the following day she would carry out in all its revolting details, she began to chat with him of their projects, of their future, of the hidden life they were leading, of their chaste love, of that distant time of sadness which, thanks to

him, had been transformed into happiness for her.

The word happiness had at first brought a bitter smile to Jean's lips; then he bethought himself that, after all, happiness was perhaps not so far away. Yes, he hoped to attain happiness—and very soon!

“Ah! if a certain project is only successful,” he said, pointedly.

“What project?” asked Lucie, in evident surprise.

Mornas was lost in amazement at this mysterious phenomenon. What! this woman to whom he had given such formal orders only a few minutes before, and who, the very next day, would convert into acts what was to him only a combination of ideas as yet, had no suspicion of the obsessing idea she carried within her, that, unknown to her, had been born and now thrived in her brain! There were therefore two persons in the woman before him: one the unconscious machine, the instrument he would use to attain his end; the other, the adored and respected creature whom he intended to

associate with his riches and his life, if his project succeeded.

And it would succeed! Why should it not? No one at M. de la Berthiere's house had any knowledge of Lucie's identity; and it was agreed that she should give no name when applying for admission to the old man's study. Nothing but a few explanatory words that would serve as a passport; that was all, save the letter concerning the manuscript of the famous work which would assure M. de la Berthiere's glory and bring him fortune! "Each to his ambition!" thought Jean.

The paralytic could neither see nor hear Lucie while she deranged the books. He would discover his loss only after several days had elapsed, provided he lived that long. But then who could he accuse?

He would certainly never dream of accusing him, Mornas, the secretary to whom he entrusted his dearest secret! And even admitting that his suspicions should fall upon the young man, his egotism, his prudence, would keep him silent.

Could suspicion fall on Lucie? No, decidedly no; for M. de la Berthiere did not know her and would not learn her name; and if the old man ever spoke of her, Jean would answer for her as for himself.

Yes, certainly beyond peradventure, the project would succeed! Yes, Jean Mornas would be rich! Yes, the Mandarin would be forced to relinquish a part of his fortune to this bold adventurer who demanded it by reason of his intrepidity, as the ferocious Malay pirate demanded it by virtue of his kriss and dagger. Yes, a change was about to come over the lives of Lucie and Jean. And happiness would go hand-in-hand with youth and love! With the youth passed in poverty and wretchedness and the love that had been stifled until then! But what a revenge it would be!—To-morrow would bring him life! He now began to taste the joys of existence!

And Mornas already inhaled the delicious odor of the feast in store for his eager teeth and the craving appetite that devoured him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Long before the hour when Lucie was to take the train for Versailles, Mornas had taken his seat on a bench facing the ticket window in the large waiting-room of the Saint-Lazare station.

He was gazing abstractedly before him, at the few arrivals whose footsteps resounded so clearly on the asphalt of the hallway, and who hurried toward the deserted gates in the gray light which filtered through the skylights in the lofty roof. A damp atmosphere, smelling of melted snow, pervaded the entire place, and a gloomy silence seemed to have settled upon this room, so gay and noisy during the summer season. Through the large windows, the walls and roofs of the city appeared like a dismal gray patch of smoke and filth under their mantle of white snow. On the walls were several placards, dating back to previous

months, displaying the names of fashionable watering-places and seeming as mournful as extinguished fire-works. Half asleep on neighboring benches were a number of shabbily dressed men, who had evidently come hither to escape the sharp winds and biting frost of the streets. As his eyes mechanically wandered from one to another of these poor wretches, Mornas could not help thinking that here, at least, were people who were poorer and more miserable than himself. "And—more honest, perhaps," he added, with an involuntary shudder. "These poor devils never dream of robbing the mandarin. They are grateful to find shelter for their ill-clad bodies in the relative warmth of this room!"

Rising from his seat, Jean walked toward the men and examined them more closely. Not one amongst them had the face of a man disgusted with existence. Then, it *was* possible to resign one's self to live thus!

"Bah!" he exclaimed, as he resumed his former seat; "it is merely the degradation pro-

duced by want! And besides, I have other appetites because I have other faculties. Let each one live according to his desires! It is the least he may demand!"

Then he began to think of Lucie. She had not come yet. Jean glanced at the dial of the clock. It still wanted three minutes of the hour. But the hands were moving on; she should be here by this time.

But if she did not come at all? If the revolt of her pure nature, the tempest of her conscience, should prove too strong for the suggestion? If the will had driven out the obsession like a bad dream? If—But Jean Mornas, who had so suddenly become skeptical of his powers, stopped short in his meditations and allowed a low cry to escape his lips when at the top of the steps leading from the street he saw Lucie advancing with a stiff, rigid step of a statue and going unhesitatingly in the direction of the window marked "Versailles."

"She has come!" he murmured, a singular emotion suddenly overcoming him as he realized her presence.

At that moment he could almost have wished she had resisted. A presentiment of some catastrophe abruptly invaded him. A terrible fear took possession of him, and while Lucie was approaching the window to purchase her ticket, he was asking himself whether he had not better intercept her in the passage and prevent her from accomplishing what he had ordered her to do—Then he was ashamed of his terror. Was it to recoil at the last moment that he had begun the solution of this problem with destiny?—Would he push the chess-board from him at the very moment when he was about to win the game? No. The die was cast—and so much the worse for the mandarin who obstructed his path.

Lucie had by this time turned away from the ticket window, and with the same quasi-mechanical movement as before was advancing toward the door of the waiting-room. Mornas feared that she might see him, or come in his direction without knowing it, and he instinctively drew away a few paces. This precaution

was entirely unnecessary, however. The young girl seemed to see nothing, and walked on as if impelled by an invincible idea, her eyes fixed straight before her.

For a moment she stood hesitatingly on the threshold of the room, then entered. Jean approached the window and pressed his face to the glass to see her again. There was still time to stop her in this path to crime which she was unconsciously following—“No, no; it would be stupid!” he muttered. “It would be cowardly to do so now!”

Through the semi-obscurity of the hallway he could distinguish a shadow against the dim background of the entrance, where the heaps of snow and the white smoke of the locomotives mingled with the horizon of gray sky. It was Lucie, still, upright and rigid. Then the gate leading from the station was pushed open by an employe, and the few passengers passed out from the gloomy hall-way to the platform where the train was waiting. Jean watched the shadowy form of the young girl

until it had disappeared into one of the coaches; then, with a sigh of relief, he turned away.

“It is done,” he thought. “And so much the better!”

Relieved from the anxiety that had devoured him since the previous day, confident and almost proud of himself, Mornas went thoughtfully down the steps and passed through the arcade of the station. At the news-stand he stopped for a moment to glance at an illustrated paper wherein a ferocious crime was represented in all its revolting reality. As he examined it, a mocking smile came to his lips and a scornful light gleamed within his eyes. “What imbeciles!” he exclaimed; “as if it were necessary to have recourse to tragedy to succeed and to conquer!”

As he turned away from the contemplation of this picture of odious brutality, Mornas experienced a sentiment of self-content rising within him. It seemed to him that he was the inventor of some curious and perfect work of art. The irony of his refractory nature made

him look upon this application of science to the satisfaction of his ambition as a skillful creation. There was within him that infatuation of the experimenter, whom experiments interest as does a wager, and of the player who stakes his life on the green cloth. But, this time the player risked only his chance of becoming rich. It was impossible that Lucie should be taken by surprise while performing the orders he had imposed upon her. It was also equally impossible that the young girl's name or whereabouts should ever become known, even supposing that M. de la Berthiere should come to suspect her later on.

The old paralytic would no doubt be carried off to death before he even suspected the disappearance of the atlas. Truly, chance was indeed smiling on Jean Mornas. On that day, when he had first obtained an entrance into the house in Rue Saint-Mederic, it was fortune that had offered itself to him. Fortune—Jean was well aware that the amount Lucie would find would not be sufficient to assure him what

might be called "a fortune;" but between his present wretchedness and the dreams he indulged in of political and financial glory—the amount, whatever it might be—would certainly be the means of attaining the fortune he so eagerly craved.

And as he walked through the streets, he made projects, combinations, traced out plans by which he could double, quadruple the amount he did not yet have—but which he would soon receive—and taking life as a game of baccarat, he debated within himself whether he would not risk some of this money on the Bourse the very next day.

But no, he concluded, it were better to keep this money as a reserve. He would wait and see later. He could now afford to wait for his chances patiently. While he went on thus, he was examining the pedestrians who jostled against him in the crowded street. Business men pushed past him, hurrying to or from their offices. Poor wretches were sweeping the snow from the side-walks, and cleaning the

muddy crossing and choked-up gutters. All seemed to Mornas as mere dupes, bending too willingly to the imposed task of daily labor. Ah! the idiots! To struggle thus, when it is so easy to escape from this human slavery by right of skill or superior strength!

Then all the Darwinian theories of "the struggle for existence" returned to Mornas under a new form. What was he—the individual—doing but applying the rule followed by nations, proclaimed by conquerors, sung by the poets of glory? Success to the more audacious, conquest to the more intrepid! And in what does conquest—he smiled at the word—take anything from the one it seems to despoil? He had already asked himself this question and had replied victoriously—to his way of thinking. But what flattered him, what appeared original and personal to him, was the manner in which he dealt with the problem of the struggle for life,—by delegation and at a distance, and in such a way that the human instrument he employed

had not even consciousness of the act accomplished.

Then Jean pictured to himself the particulars of the drama that was passing at Versailles—for his profit.

“It is a quarter to two—Lucie has arrived at the station—Two o’clock—She is in Rue Saint-Mederic—Yes, certainly—She rings—The door is opened—She is admitted—M. de la Berthiere is there—She removes the volumes of the encyclopedia, and draws forth the atlas—She searches it and takes what it contains—It must be done at this time—It is done, I shall be rich!”

Not a single detail of the scene escaped him. He really saw her. Everything was being accomplished at Versailles as he had commanded. It was impossible for her to do otherwise. Nevertheless, as the hours passed, a sort of fever invaded Mornas. He felt nervous and uneasy. He wanted to walk faster, to walk continually, as if the activity of his body would make time drag less heavily

and seem shorter to him. Then, overcome by physical and moral lassitude, he returned home to his solitary room, where he sank exhausted into a chair. There was evidently nothing to be done but await Lucie's coming.

She would come. She would certainly be there within an hour!

But what if she did not come!

At this thought, all the possible obstacles, difficulties and dangers of an enterprise such as he had planned suddenly flashed upon him. He accused himself of temerity, of absolute madness even, in thus tempting fate. Did the state of submission into which he had plunged the young girl render her less liable to arrest? She was, perhaps, at that very moment, at the police station, detained there under an accusation of robbery—This idea made him shudder and augmented his nervous fever. Then he tried to laugh at his terrors, accusing himself of pusillanimity; and taking up a volume of Schopenhauer, a favorite of his, he tried to read; but the subtile reasoning seemed pitiful to him in his perilous position.

Straining his ears, he listened anxiously to the passing footsteps in the corridor. She might come at any moment. A few minutes more and he would know his fate. He would be rich! rich!

He began to fear he might go mad. His ears buzzed as on those nights of atrocious temptation. The blood flowed to his brain with such an impetuous rush that he was forced to bathe his head in water through fear of congestion.

Some one finally stopped before his door, and a hand sought the bell-cord.

He turned ghastly pale, and for an instant his heart seemed to stop its beating. But at the first tinkle of the bell he recovered himself, and, rushing to the door, threw it open. Lucie was standing on the threshold and entered without uttering a word, in a hurried manner as if fearing pursuit.

She walked straight to the little table on which Jean's papers were scattered, while he quickly closed the door behind her.

Going up to her, he then fixed his eyes intently on her face; but before he could utter a word, the young girl threw a pile of bank notes upon the table and said, in a strangely firm and precise tone:

“Here it is!”

Jean seized the pile of bills and gazed at it in a sort of silent rapture.

Could it be possible? Was it not an illusion?

He spread them out before him and began to count them; while Lucie, upright and rigid as he had seen her at the railway station, looked on as if she did not realize what was passing about her.

“Thirty-seven!” said Mornas, as he finished counting.

Yes, lying there before him, in bills of one thousand, of five hundred, and of one hundred francs, were thirty-seven thousand francs. The lever which would raise the stone of fortune—Thirty-seven thousand francs! Jean counted them again, touched them, admired them. Then glancing about the room for a place to hide

his treasure, and not finding any that seemed as secure as his breast, he thrust the bank notes quickly into the inside pocket of his threadbare coat and buttoned it tightly about his figure.

The pressure of the package against his breast sent an intoxicating thrill through the young man's entire body. It was like a suit of armor that would enable him to brave everything for the future.

Then, turning to Lucie, he asked, in the low, guarded tone of an accomplice who does not even dare enquire all the details:

“—And—was it easily done?”

She did not reply, but remained motionless in her sculptural rigidity, her haggard eyes seemingly set in a face of marble.

“How did it pass off?” asked Jean, after a moment of silence.

“I do not know,” replied Lucie, in an odd, vibrating tone.

The accent in which these words were uttered was so strange that Jean experienced a sudden **uneasiness.**

“But you can certainly tell me what took place,” he persisted; “I want to know—”

“I was pushed on by some unknown force,” she replied. “I went on—I went on—Why did I go on? Because I was obliged to—Yes!—” and she seemed still to be struggling against herself, against the obsession—“I was obliged to—I went there—I saw the man—I was left alone with him. I pushed the acoustic tube out of reach of his hands—”

“He could not see you?” interrupted Mornas enquiringly. “He can not see? He is blind, is he not?”

“Blind, yes. But he could hear.”

Lucie’s voice assumed an expression of alarm as she said this; and without knowing why, Mornas guessed some peril.

“He could hear?” he echoed.

“Yes,” she assented, in the same impassible tone.

“And he heard you?” persisted Mornas, fixing his eyes on her face.

“ Yes—while I was searching the books—and then—”

She closed her eyes and shook her head, as if to drive away a bad dream or vision.

“ Then? ” repeated Mornas, tearing the words one by one from Lucie’s lips.

“ Then—listening, he guessed—yes, guessed that we wanted to rob him—He uttered a cry, and—”

“ The servants rushed in? ” suggested Jean.

“ Ah! if they had come! ” she rejoined, with a shudder. “ But no, they did not come, ” she went on vehemently. “ He sat up in his bed—Fear and anger lent him strength—He dragged himself toward me, and placed his hand on my shoulder—long, bony fingers that clutched me like piercing claws—I had taken the bills, for I was obliged to take them—it was stronger than myself—Something impelled me on, for he had stolen them—had he not?—And as he tried to snatch them from me, I—”

“ You what? ” he asked, quivering with emotion.

"I pushed him from me, and he fell to the floor beside the bed. He lay there stiff and motionless, and then I came away!"

"Came away?" repeated Mornas. "How so?"

"My work was done," she replied. "You told me to take the money he had stolen away, and to bring it to you. It is done!"

"But," said Mornas, hesitating a little, "what of him?"

"Of whom?"

"Of M. de la Berthiere?"

"I had nothing to do with him," she retorted quickly. "I was to go there; I was to do that, and I have done it—Adieu!"

And she moved toward the door to go out.

Jean intercepted her, however; and, taking her hand, said in a gentle tone:

"Tell me, Lucie, when he—M. de la Berthiere—fell, did he call again?—Did he speak?"

"I don't know," she replied.

"He was alive, at least?"

"I don't know."

"You did not kill him?"

"I don't know."

She still retained that same tragic immobility; and now Mornas felt a heavy pressure on his chest, as if the bank notes were stifling him.

Lucie's eternal replies of "I don't know, I don't know," filled him with terrible uneasiness. What tragedy had taken place over there, the bare recollection of which had not even remained on this brain dominated by a fixed idea?

He made several attempts to bring Lucie's mind back to the scene in the Rue Saint-Mederic, to induce her to relate all that had happened. But the young girl evaded the point and persisted in her unsatisfactory reply of "I don't know!"

"I want to go," she said in a short, determined tone. "Let me go, at once!"

And without knowing why, he instinctively tried to retain her, as if some danger threat-

ened her outside of that wretched room. Where would she go? To her home at Montmartre, no doubt. She was eager to be alone. It seemed to him that she wanted to be alone to weep. Her whole nervous system was so terribly overwrought and distended that he feared she was on the point of breaking down, and that a paroxysm of tears was the only thing that could soothe her.

"I will not let you go, Lucie!" he said, trying to retain her.

"But I must go, I must!" she replied, her delicate little hand pushing him back with strange nervous strength."

"What will you do at Montmartre?" he asked.

"Nothing, I want to be alone," she said, listlessly. Then as if suddenly conscious of what she had done and stricken by remorse, she added brokenly: "I want to weep!"

Jean allowed her to go, thinking he would see her the next day. Yes, he would go to see her to-morrow; and slipping his arm

about her waist, he tried to bring his lips to the young girl's forehead; but she repulsed him and looked at him with a sort of hatred in her usually gentle eyes.

He opened the window to see her again in the street. She stalked on with the same automatic step of the morning, until he lost sight of her at the corner.

"Bah!" thought Mornas, "she will obey the order prohibiting her from talking, as she did the suggestion commanding her to act!"

Then taking out the package of bank-notes, he counted it over several times, with the satisfaction of a miser.

"Come what may," he muttered, "this is the beginning of my fortune. And living or dead, I may thank the mandarin for it—"

CHAPTER IX.

JEAN, however, passed a bad night after that evening of triumph. It seemed to him that he had been dragged by men in Chinese costume into a room where he saw the corpse of a murdered man who bore a terrible resemblance to M. de la Berthiere, and on the chimney was a marble statuette, a living portrait of Lucie, which gazed at him with large, haggard eyes. This distressing dream pursued him until day-break; and he arose in the morning, restless and his body racked with pain, as if suffering from an attack of rheumatism.

So greatly agitated was he by the uneasy night he had spent, that his first impulse was to go to Versailles and ascertain what had passed in the Rue Saint-Mederic. But he quickly realized that this idea was too imprudent. It would certainly be better to wait.

Besides, Lucie might perhaps be able to tell him all to-day—But Jean stopped short at this point. No, no, he must never again allude to this drama before Lucie. He must leave her a prey to that vague recollection which would, little by little, become obliterated in her mind. Yes, the fixed idea imposed on her by the suggestion would certainly lose its precision as time passed and would soon assume the appearance of a confused nightmare. The luxury and the life of ease he would share with the poor child would make her forget this terrible adventure. And then—they would be happy together.

He really loved Lucie. And with the superstition of a skeptic, his love for her seemed to have grown since she had served as an instrument of fortune to him. He was anxious to see her again. He wanted to propose to her—not to fly—but to spend a few days with him at his home in the South. He would present her to his parents, who would be so happy to learn that he had at last decided to marry.

He imagined his mother's joyous tears and Lucie's happy smile—and all this appeared to him in a frame of warm light, in a haze of golden sunshine.

"A pastoral poem!" he exclaimed, with a sarcastic laugh. "Upon my word, Mornas, you are becoming sentimental!"

But this very sentimentalism at which he sneered was still another of the satisfactions he had planned. A hal before the battle, with Lucie's kisses—when she had become his wife—to give him courage. And then to the breach—boldly!

After breakfasting at a neighboring restaurant, Jean set off for Montmartre. The mist had now almost entirely disappeared, and the sun was beginning to melt the patches of snow on the walks. The young man inhaled the bracing air in long draughts as he strode on with a light step, and a clarion of victory seemed to sing in his ears. When he reached Rue Audrain he was surprised to see a crowd of neighbors and people of the quarter grouped

in front of the house where Lucie resided. A low murmur of comments and ribald jests arose from this crowd of men and women; and as Mornas drew nearer, an instinctive dread of some impending peril suddenly assailed him.

As he approached still closer to this throng of jabbering humanity, his face became deathly pale and his heart almost ceased to beat. Lucie's name was on every one's tongue. With the rapidity of a flash of lightning, the truth flashed upon him—Lucie had been arrested.

Arrested!—What had happened at Versailles? How had it been discovered?—And Jean strained his ears, seizing eagerly from the confused babblings of the people around him snatches of explanations and shreds of the truth. There could be no further doubt. Lucie had been recognized and followed. She had left some clew at Versailles; and the police of Paris had been notified by telegraph—But of what crime was the young girl accused?—Jean could not succeed in learning exactly;

with his hand to his face and the collar of his overcoat turned up about his ears, through fear of being recognized by some neighbor who might have remarked his visits to Lucie, he awaited to discover, by some definite statement, what she—and himself—had to fear.

As he stood thus, in the midst of the noisy throng, he heard Lucie accused of robbery, of purloining securities, and of many other crimes. One stout woman, eager to give herself importance, shook her head significantly and spoke of infanticide. As she did so, she raised her fat hand from which dangled a little charm. Mornas was tempted to seize her by the wrist and cry out that she lied. This charm reminded him of the one he had seen Lucie gazing upon the first time he had met her! Charm, indeed! —What an ironical name—Poor girl! And almost forgetting that it was he who had thrown her in the way of these accusations, he began to lament over her misfortune and ask himself what he would do in her defense.

He returned home with his brain racked by

conflicting thoughts. Should he fly? Was he not directly menaced by this accusation against Lucie? What must he do?

Flight would bring suspicion upon him, and assure pursuit. And, besides, in her present state, when so absolutely under the sway of an exterior thought, Lucie would not speak. No, certainly not, she would not speak!

Then, what had he to fear? —

He feared nothing; and his powers of resistance and audacity abruptly returned to him at the prospect of a possible danger. Only his heart had been pierced by this collapse, so sudden, so dramatic, so brutal, so—

“Some would say providential,” he murmured, with a wicked laugh.

This unexpected result, this combination which had ended in a murder, was indeed terrifying. It had surpassed his wish in a frightful manner. He had planned to go as far as robbery; and the logic of the suggestion had driven him to that point, to assassination perhaps. He had unchained an instinct, a force,

and, as a bullet goes straight to its destination, Lucie had accomplished the order suggested—but how?—Nothing, nothing in the world could have prevented her from obeying! Mornas resembled a man who, having plunged his hands into the water to bring out gold, would find he had brought up the remains of a corpse. But how had the poor unfortunate girl's name and address been learned? And of what crime was she accused? M. de la Berthiere must then have been able to tell—

At the old man's name, Mornas' very thoughts seemed to hesitate. He almost wished that M. de la Berthiere had been able to tell. But a secret terror came over him at the thought of such a possibility—and what if he were dead?

“You wanted to kill the mandarin!” he laughed bitterly—“And he may have been killed!”

He shuddered at the possibility of such a catastrophe, and a terrible uneasiness concerning Lucie took possession of him.

He awaited the coming of the evening news-

papers with feverish anxiety, hoping the details of the arrest and accusation might be given. But no, the Parisian reporters were yet in ignorance of the tragedy. Taking an evening train, Jean went to Versailles, and there found that the old man's death was the sole topic of conversation. Boldly accosting the first cab-driver he met, he asked the particulars of the "tragedy of the Rue Saint-Mederic;" and it was with a sensation, as of a chill creeping up his back, that he listened to the answer: M. de la Berthiere—an old miser—and a rascal as well—had been killed by a woman. "Like Marat by Charlotte Corday," added the cab-driver, "only that in this case the knife was a letter."

Yes, M. de la Berthiere had been thrown brutally against a piece of furniture. The old paralytic's forehead had struck against the sharp corner of the book-case, and the blow on the temple had finished him. Such was the account of the affair given by the man.

As to the manner in which she had been

traced, it was simple enough. The woman was not a resident of Versailles, but a Parisienne it appeared; some even declared her to be a former mistress, or an illegitimate daughter of M. de la Berthiere. One of the gatemen at the railway station had remarked the strange manners of a young girl who had paced up and down the waiting-room, with eyes so fixed in their immovable expression that they seemed of glass. When asked for her ticket she had drawn it out of a small satchel, letting fall some papers as she did so. The guard had quickly picked up the papers and given them to her as she passed on to the train, which was on the point of departure. Happening to glance at the floor a moment later, however, he had perceived a letter which had been overlooked; but as the train was already in motion, he had placed it aside to return when called for. This letter was from the proprietor of a large shop in Paris, and was addressed to *Mademoiselle Lucie Lorin, rue Audran, a Montmartre.*

As soon as M. de la Berthiere's death had

been reported to the police by his servants, officers had been dispatched to the stations to watch for the guilty person. On questioning the gateman already mentioned, he had related the singular impression produced on him by the girl, and handed the letter and envelope to the officers. His description of the young woman's manners and dress tallied so precisely with that given by the servants of the murdered man's visitor that the chief of police at Versailles had immediately telegraphed the Parisian police to arrest a woman, or young girl, known as Lucie Lorin. "And this" concluded the cabby, "is how Versailles obtained the good fortune of being the scene of a tragedy, which will make a sensation and bring plenty of work to cab-drivers; for hundreds of people will come to see the house in which the murder was committed."

Mornas had heard enough. One idea alone surged above all others in his mind; he must return to Paris without delay. Impelled by that morbid magnetism which the scene of the

crime possesses for the criminal, however, he went toward the house in which Lucie had perpetrated the deed. A crowd of curiosity seekers had gathered in front of the dismal place, and this silent corner of the dead city had suddenly become animated by the presence of a throng of morbid people. Standing on the walk directly opposite the little door he had so often entered, Mornas kept his eyes fixed on the wall, which he in a manner pierced with his thoughts, picturing to himself the old man lying there, motionless on the low bed in the study—The mandarin was dead! He was sleeping his last sleep! And strange to say, Jean experienced no remorse. Neither remorse nor fear. He was saying to himself that an accused person was not a condemned criminal; that in spite of the overwhelming evidence against her, Lucie would easily prove her innocence, escape from the accusation—by some means or other—and that a new life would open to them.

But when he found himself alone in the

railway carriage on his way back to Paris and brought himself face to face with the new state of affairs, he began to feel the agony of intense fears invading him. She might escape from the accusation! But how? The crime was a heinous one, and Lucie had almost been caught in the act, so swiftly and surely had justice followed her after the commission. Though he gradually came to a full realization of the terrors of the young girl's position, he experienced no more remorse than he had felt when near the scene of the tragedy; but a sensation of genuine alarm seized him, however, the violence of which augmented in proportion as he neared Paris. The entrance into the city through the breach of the fortifications, produced the effect of the opening of a mouse-trap on him.

As he descended from the train, it seemed to him that the station was crowded with police officers, watching the arrivals to seize the guilty persons. It was an illusion, no doubt; for who could suspect that Lucy Lorin had an

accomplice? And as he walked on toward Rue Racine, he reasoned the matter in a scientific and decisive manner. Being entirely unconscious of the act she had committed, the young girl would remain as impassible before all questionings as she had been in the accomplishment of the orders dictated to her. She would never divulge the secret of the crime of which she had been guilty without having had a clear perception of it. She would remain a living enigma to Science, which would examine her, and Law, which would interrogate her. The idea of silence was implanted in her mind; she would not speak; she would not divulge any name, any secret. Mornas had therefore nothing to fear. And the very state into which Lucie had been plunged would cause the judges to hesitate and save the accused. Yes, that was precisely the point. Lucie's safety was in that very suggestion, in that submission of her will to that of another—another whom she would never designate.

Notwithstanding these logical deductions he had a certain apprehension at crossing the threshold of his home, as if he feared to find some one waiting for him there. He experienced that uneasy sensation of being followed by somebody. As he was turning into Rue Racine, an odd shadow appeared before him; and he turned abruptly, almost feeling that sort of contact produced by a hand being laid on his shoulder. But he was alone. It was merely his own shadow, which stretched out before him and which he had not recognized.

In his room, the door of which he locked carefully behind him, he experienced a moment of calmness. For the hundredth time, he counted over the package of bank-notes which were to raise him above the wretchedness of his former existence. Then a new terror overcame him. Going hastily to the window, he pulled the heavy curtains together and fixed them securely.

If he were watched from across the street? If some one were watching him? If he were robbed?

“Rob me!” he repeated aloud. “Ah! indeed!”

And in spite of his fright, he was almost inclined to laugh at the thought that he had suddenly become one of those whom it was right to rob—a mandarin, like the dead man.

Then he asked himself if it were not better to hide the bank-notes or trust them to the care of some faithful friend—But to whom? At this point of his meditations he came to a sudden stop. Then the image of his parents rose before him. The poor old people would be so happy to learn that their Jean had found, or earned a fortune, and would gladly keep it for him; considering this deposit from their son as a sacred trust. But through an odd scruple not unfrequently found in somber souls, the idea of associating these poor people with his crime seemed more hideous than the crime itself. No, decidedly, he had no choice; he must keep his treasure with him. He would carry it on his breast, where he could feel its pleasing touch on his skin, and would defend it with his life.

CHAPTER X.

THE morning following her arrest, Lucie Lorin was brought before the physician whose duty it was to examine delicate or sick prisoners detained at the *Prefecture*. Since her incarceration, the young girl had touched no food and had positively refused to reply to the questions addressed her by the magistrate at the preliminary examination.

In the bare little room adjoining the infirmary into which she was led, she found a tall powerful man, with kind benevolent eyes, seated near the window beside a small table littered with numberless bundles of papers with official headings. As the young girl advanced, she glanced curiously at the physician, while the latter gazed at her with an expression of evident astonishment. Men of science have singular intuitions; and daily contact with

so many moral and physical ailments had given the eminent physician a deep insight into the griefs that afflict the human species. For a moment he remained silent, watching the face before him attentively, intuitively recognizing a living problem in the delicate, gentle nature.

Attired in her simple black dress, and standing between a warden and one of the female attendants at the infirmary, Lucie remained motionless and rigid; her calm blue eyes encountering the physician's gaze without flinching. There was a mixture of frankness and strange resolution in the young girl's sparkling pupils. The doctor at once suspected a mystery. This frail creature, so sympathetic of aspect, so timid, accused of a crime! This little hand capable of giving a death-blow to a man! The *savant* was surprised, to say the least.

"Ah! this is something interesting, very interesting," he murmured, as he gently caressed his chin with his thumb and fore-finger.

Then he began to question her.

And Lucie, who had been almost dumb until then, answered him freely. Under his gaze, she felt herself enveloped in a sort of pity which moved her. When before the magistrate on the previous day, she had refused to say anything. Now she spoke without reserve.

“Is it true, is it possible that you can have committed the crime of which you are accused?” asked the physician—“You must then have been familiar with M. de la Berthiere’s habits and his surroundings?”

“No,” replied Lucie. “I had no previous knowledge of either.”

“This was the first time you visited his house?”

“Yes, the first and only time.”

“But why did you go there?”

“Why?” she echoed, her half frightened eyes fixing themselves on her questioner’s face.

“Why?” she repeated. “Because I was obliged to do so!”

“What do you mean? You were obliged to do so?”

“Yes,” repeated the young girl, in a sharp tone. “I was obliged to do so!”

The physician gazed silently at Lucie, who still retained her rigidity and impassibility, while the warden and female attendant exchanged a meaning, distrustful glance behind the poor girl's blonde head, plainly expressing their suspicions of such naivety and innocence.

“Have you frequently been ill?” asked the physician, after a short pause.

“I?” she asked.

“Yes; through what severe illnesses have you suffered? —Typhoid fever?”

“Yes, I have had typhoid fever,” she returned.

“How old were you then?”

“Twelve years of age.”

The physician made a note of her answers on the sheet of paper lying before him, then resumed his inquiry.

"Your parents are not living?" he pursued.

"No," replied the girl, sadly.

"Did you ever hear them say that you had convulsions during your infancy?"

For a moment Lucie's blue eyes seemed to search the past, then she replied unhesitatingly:

"No, Monsieur—Mother—" her bosom heaved, and even the physician was impressed by the gentle and sorrowful tone in which she pronounced this name—"Mother never spoke of that. She merely said that I was weak—very weak, and that she feared to see me go before herself—I would much have preferred it so—"

Two big tears rolled down her cheeks as she spoke; but quickly brushing them away, she resumed her motionless attitude, and stood before her questioner like an enigma in flesh and blood.

"I am not a magistrate, and have not the right to question you like a Judge of Instruc-

tion," resumed the doctor, gently. "But, come, was it really you who killed M. de la Berthiere?"

"Killed him," repeated Lucie in a savage tone, while her eyebrows contracted harshly.

"I did not want to kill him," she went on. "I did not even want to harm him. I simply wanted to keep him from preventing me from accomplishing what must be done."

"What must be done!" exclaimed the physician. "And what were you obliged to do in M. de la Berthiere's house?"

"That is my secret!" said Lucie in a curt tone.

"Beware, my poor girl," protested the doctor, in a warning voice. "Justice will demand an explanation of this secret!"

"Justice will learn nothing from me!" she retorted, doggedly, "I will not speak!"

"But—allow me to warn you—if you persist in this silence, you are lost—absolutely lost!"

"Lost!" she echoed.

“Remember that your crime is a heinous one!”

“I had no desire to commit crime—I did not want to—What I did, I was obliged to do!”

“You were obliged to!” he repeated, “obliged to! —”

“Yes,” she interrupted, shortly, “I was obliged to!”

“This was the answer she had given Mornas the night he had so impatiently awaited her return from Versailles, and it was now her obstinate reply to all the physician’s pressing questions. She was evidently determined to say no more concerning the crime committed; and the puzzled physician thoughtfully scratched his head with the tip of the wooden pen-holder he held suspended over the sheet of paper before him; powerless to write out the report he had intended to draw up.

He was much bewildered and embarrassed. He realized that there existed some ailment in the delicate creature standing before him; and

yet he saw little to warrant a supposition of mental disorder. The young girl was neither demented nor subject to convulsions. Though weak-minded, perhaps, she nevertheless replied to all his questions with clearness and lucidity; and the obstinacy of a human being in refusing to explain her conduct could certainly not be called madness. To the physician habituated to the sinister scenes of everyday life presented at police headquarters, to the student of cerebral enigmas placed as he was at the mouth of an immense moral catch basin, this unknown quantity to be extracted from a living problem, which he had vainly tried to solve, possessed a peculiar fascination.

"I was obliged to do so!" This was not the reason usually given by criminals caught red-handed. Some denied, while others explained their atrocity by some moral or external cause—anger or alcohol. The girl, however, clung to this phrase with a morbid obstinacy that denoted mental unsoundness. "Did M. de la Berthiere know you?" he persisted. She shook

her head in silence. "Had you any motive of revenge?"—"No!"—"Why then did you go to his house? Why did you push him from you so violently that his fall should cause death?" Still the same words, the same phrase, repeated with a sort of maniacal fury came from her lips: "I was obliged to do so!"

Evidently this girl's mind was undergoing, or had undergone, some severe shock. By making inquiries into her past life, an explanation of her strange conduct would perhaps be found. The physician therefore asked her for the name of the doctor who had attended her during childhood.

"The physician?" she queried.

"Yes. You must remember his name?"

"Oh! certainly."

"What was it?"

"M. Pomeroy."

"Pomeroy!" said the doctor. "I know him very intimately. And he is the best man living."

He ordered that Lucie be taken back to

the infirmary, and, before giving an opinion on the young girl's mental state, requested a delay from the magistrate that he might consult his *confrère* Pomeroy.

Good-hearted Pomeroy! He had voluntarily remained in the shadow. The minor cares of every-day life, more difficult of accomplishment than greater duties, had kept him in obscurity, while his old comrade at the hospital was becoming one of the lights of his profession and a glory to his country. The physician at the *Prefecture* had a great regard for honest, retiring Pomeroy, who avoided all occasions of notoriety with as much zeal as others displayed in seeking them. Had he wished it, Pomeroy might to-day be member of the Academy, officer of the Legion of Honor, celebrated, rich!—Bah! Pomeroy was a sort of prince of science who did not care to reign. He had abdicated his principality to live as he pleased; a life without turmoil, between his old books and his poor patients. He maintained that fame must be dearly bought, and that honors cost too much. Perhaps he was right.

Doctor Pomeroy was almost stupefied when his old friend informed him that justice desired his testimony concerning a young girl called Lucie Lorin, whom he had formerly treated. Lucie!—the good man had always felt a paternal weakness for this child, whom he had saved from croup and typhoid fever. He had always felt a sincere affection for these poor people; and amongst all his patients—who never paid him—Mme. Lorin had been one of the preferred ones. The good woman had seemed so admirable to him, and the little girl so charming! They bore the fatigues of their laborious life so courageously. And, besides, really—yes—he had saved Lucie. Had it not been for him, who could tell what might have happened? And he had become attached to her like the artist to his work: the life-giving work which raises the physician to the level of a creature next to the creator.

But the child had now grown up to womanhood; and for a long time—since Mme. Lorin's death, in fact, the kind old doctor had ceased to

follow her movements and had almost lost sight of her. Provided the young girl turned out well, as we commonly express it,—“That is to say, if her head is not turned!” he thought, “all would be well.” Notwithstanding his recent encounter with Lucie, he was almost entirely ignorant of her mode of life and knew nothing of her relations with Mornas, whom he knew slightly and had seen following the mother’s coffin to the cemetery. He was, therefore, absolutely unaware of the romantic idyl which had so suddenly terminated in a crime.

When told that Lucie, pretty little Lucie, was under arrest at the *Prefecture de police*, charged with a terrible crime, the good old man’s pale face flushed violently with sudden indignation.

“Such a thing is impossible!” he cried, vehemently, the blood rushing to his head from the shock of his overwhelming emotion. “Impossible! impossible!” he repeated. “Ah! if it were true, it would be a rude shock to my optimism,” and the philanthropic old man shook

his head sadly. "Such a gentle child!—Such an ideal head!" he murmured—"What can it mean?"

He paused for a moment, then added, abruptly:

"Bah! it means nothing at all—It is impossible, simply impossible!"

The poor doctor ate no breakfast that morning, and seriously alarmed his house-keeper by rushing out bare-headed to keep his appointment at the *Prefecture*. He had reached the street, in fact, before the woman's loud and reiterated calls from the top of the stairs recalled him to himself and brought him to a realization of his ridiculous appearance.

What was he thinking of? He was thinking of Lucie, as he had seen her in her sick bed when a child, and of the expression of purity that had beamed from her calm blue eyes. And she had become a criminal?—"Impossible! impossible!" He repeated the word almost savagely, as he pulled down over his long white locks the hat handed him by the old house-keeper.

"I should have watched over her more closely than I did," he muttered. "Saving the child is all very well. But I should also have looked after the woman. Upon my word, I am nothing but a selfish old man!"

In the streets through which he passed on his way to the place of meeting, he more than once attracted the attention of the pedestrians by the involuntary gestures which accompanied each series of reflections and which always terminated as in a song, by these words:

"Impossible! it is impossible—"

This good old man firmly believed in the honesty of people; he believed above all in the probity and in the purity of certain privileged beings, as others quite naturally believe in evil. It pleased him to be a dupe; or rather he maintained that he had never been a dupe, and that good invariably overcomes evil in this world. "And the proof of this is that the world goes on," he explained.

The idea that this child, whom he had seen grow up almost under his eyes, could be sus-

pected of infamy—and, even worse than that, of an atrocity—made his heart revolt.

Lucie!—accused of a crime! They did not know her, that was all!”

His emotion was indeed poignant when he found himself face to face with the young girl in the dreary prison room. He remembered her as he had seen her on the day of her first communion, with her blonde wavy hair floating beneath her white veil, like gold beneath a silver cloud. And he now saw her in this Parisian cesspool, between these walls polluted by women bespattered with mire and assassins reeking with blood.

He bowed his snow-white head over Lucie as he clasped her little hand in his, his pale, wan features expressing all the sympathy and emotion of his kind heart. After a first moment of deep agitation, the girl quickly regained her composure, finding in the fixed idea that dominated her the strength necessary to bear unflinchingly the gaze and questions put to her by this honest man, who had formerly

been so faithful a friend to her mother and herself. Pomeroy experienced a sensation of shame and humiliation, as if the prisoner detained there under an accusation of murder were of his own kin. And was she not also accused of robbery? Ah! that was more cruel still to bear. The examination of the old man's study had disclosed the fact that his death had been either preceded or followed by robbery! Without clearly understanding why, this second accusation irritated and humiliated the old doctor more than the first. Lucie a murderess, was an impossibility; and it seemed to him that there could be no difficulty in proving this impossibility. For why should she have struck M. de la Berthiere? Lucie a thief, was something more vile—and the accusation was more difficult to combat. No one had entered the old man's study before the young girl's arrival, and everything had been left in the state found by the servants when the murder had been first discovered. The rows of disordered books, the rifled atlas, the large vol-

umes in which were found a number of bank-notes, all tended to prove that the motive of the crime was robbery. Yes, robbery! It was clear that the guilty party had entered the old man's house with the intention of robbing him, and some unexpected obstacle having intervened, he had killed him.

Doctor Pomeroy had learned all this before going to the station. The Judge of Instruction had explained the matter point by point to him. It was evident that the accusation held Lucie as in the closely woven meshes of a net. This girl was a thief! Where had she hidden, to whom had she confided the bank-notes she had taken from Rue Saint-Mederic? She had made no reply to these questions, and had obstinately maintained that it was a case of restitution. Restitution! the word Mornas had used to prevail on Lucie to obey, had overcome the scruples of her slumbering conscience. Pomeroy had listened attentively to the magistrate's words; but the evidence nevertheless failed to convince him. In spite of all these

proofs, he could not bring himself to believe in the young girl's guilt; unless it proved to be a case of mental aberration or madness.

"Yes, she might be mad!" he concluded, with a sigh.

When finally admitted to her presence he did not dare question her, and allowed the prison physician to recommence his inquiry. But it proved a mere repetition of his former attempt. The only reply received from Lucie was the same irritating reason—which was no reason at all—"I was obliged to do it!"

"This is the only thing I can get her to say!" whispered the physician in Pomeroy's ear.

The warden and female attendant who stood beside Lucie's motionless figure again exchanged glances of scornful pity. They had seen so many obstinate criminals, each following his own particular system of defense, that they had lost all confidence in human nature, and particularly in the wretches entrusted to their care.

But what surprised even them, was that this girl, so polite and gentle, so calm and yet resolute, did not even try to defend herself.

“It is incomprehensible!—incomprehensible!” murmured Pomeroy between his teeth, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Then he tried in his turn, speaking to her of the past, evoking the tender recollections of her childhood and of her mother, trying to make the unfortunate girl weaken in some explanation and force her to break her rigid silence. For one moment, one moment only, he felt that he had made an impression on her unnatural calm, but her resolute will quickly regained the upper hand, and though she trembled with emotion, she quickly recovered her implacable firmness, and replied in the same tone as before:

“I was obliged to.”

“And why? Come, tell me why you were obliged to do so?” persisted Doctor Pomeroy.

“Why?” she repeated.

“Yes.”

This was the eternal interrogation point; the eternal problem, the incessant question. Lucie replied to his question with an explanation that did not explain. She reiterated the obligation of obedience, the necessity, the fatality of going where she had gone, of doing what she had done.

As she concluded, the old doctor arose and said, almost angrily:

“Come, look at me—straight in the face!”

He had taken her by the wrists, and was forcing her to meet his gaze—without any other motive, however, than to read within her heart, to catch a glimpse of her conscience in the depths of her clear limpid pupils.

“Tell me the truth, Lucie; tell me all!—” he commanded. “You know my warm affection for you—your silence and answers grieve me—grieve me deeply. Come, I beg you, my child, tell me the truth! the truth!”

“I have told you the truth!” responded Lucie, unflinchingly, as she tried to resume a more rigid attitude before the fixed gaze of

this old man who, with a swelling heart, entreated her to speak.

But the inward struggle to escape from these questions proved too much for the delicate frame, her head suddenly drooped on her shoulder, and she sank unconscious in the attendant's arms.

"Take her back to the infirmary at once!" ordered the official physician. "Watch her closely—and try to make her take some nourishment—some *bouillon*—I shall continue the examination to-morrow!"

He had turned to Pomeroy, much perplexed; while the attendant, aided by the warden and another assistant who had hurried in, carried Lucie into the infirmary.

Pomeroy seemed completely stunned. He gazed stupidly at the door through which the young girl had disappeared, and stood motionless and dazed.

"I don't understand it!" he exclaimed at last.

"There is evidently something that escapes

us in this matter," said the other physician. "A lunatic?—No.—Haunted by a fixed idea?—Probably—I have been asking myself whether I had not better order her taken to Saint-Anne."

Although Doctor Pomeroy did not naturally share the instinctive dread of the hospital encountered among people in general, he nevertheless shuddered at the suggestion, as if he already saw Lucie confined within those somber walls. He would have found it difficult to explain why—for, after all, the unhappy girl clung to her fixed idea like a persecuted being or a maniac—but in spite of her admissions, she seemed neither a lunatic nor a guilty person.

"Yes, I am sure I am right," he declared, "she is neither guilty nor insane!"

"Then, in your opinion, what is she?" asked his *confrère*.

"Ah! what is she, indeed?—If I only knew!"

"It is really a most mysterious affair," observed the prison physician, as he escorted

Doctor Pomeroy from the room. "Very strange indeed—When spoken to, she has the appearance of a somnambulist and replies with the obstinacy of a child repeating a lesson learned by heart, as if some one had impressed this single refrain upon her mind. 'I was obliged to do so! I was obliged to do so!' A dramatic phrase which, from the stage, would bring a smile to all lips, but which, eternally repeated, with the same calmness and in the same tone, seems almost tragic to me—she was obliged to! But why was she obliged to do so? Whom could this crime, this robbery or murder benefit? A crime is rarely conceived by one person, there is nearly always an accomplice. Even supposing the crime in this instance, who could have suggested it to Lucie Lorin?"

"Suggested?—Who?" repeated Pomeroy, mechanically, "suggested?"—

"Yes, *suggested!*" exclaimed his companion, energetically, fully convinced he had discovered a new clew.

A deep silence followed, which neither

seemed disposed to break; then, as Pomeroy extended his hand to his companion, the latter added, impressively: "We are not at the end of our resources yet—To-morrow I shall ask the magistrate to delay the examination until we have prepared a report—you know this girl's temperament—search your brain, your memory—there may be something wrong in that brain—Good by!"

"Good by!" repeated Pomeroy, as he turned away, his genial features reflecting the agitation raging within him.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE word uttered by his companion had particularly struck the good old doctor; a word which had suddenly awakened in his mind a world of new thoughts, a host of incredulities of yesterday, which might become possibilities of to-day.

“Suggested!” Even supposing the crime in this instance,” had said the prison physician, “who could have suggested it to Lucie?”

This word, to which his colleague had probably attached no importance, he was now repeating to himself as he hurried along, with a sort of persistent fury, like a man who finds himself before a closed door beyond which he is sure light and liberty are to be found.

Suggested! If the crime existed, Lucie had evidently neither planned nor executed it alone. Some exterior will had combined with hers

and suggested the idea. But—the doctor stopped short in his reflections at this point. A new and more defined sense, a more decisive application to the word “suggested,” had suddenly dawned upon him. The suggestion of which his *confrère* had spoken a moment before in vague terms now assumed a new significance in his eyes; a formidable and alarming significance, but a significance that meant hope also. Then he asked himself whether the suggester might not be the guilty one—and perhaps the only guilty one—instead of the accomplice.

“And why not? why not?” repeated the old doctor, as he strode through the streets in the direction of Montmartre.

Though he had paid little heed to the question, he had often heard of those truly alarming and wonderful experiments which had revolutionized science and fired even the most indifferent with enthusiasm.

He knew that at the *Salpêtrière* the experiments had succeeded in exactly determining

the crises of hysteria, in studying the human brain as if it were a mechanical apparatus, in analyzing nervous ailments in living subjects with the same precision applied in dissecting a corpse. He had hitherto read the works on hypnotism with a skeptical smile, and looked upon them as curiosities without practical application. It displeased him not a little, hardened old idealist that he was, to be forced to admit that these researches on cerebral localization almost brought him back to the materialistic system of Gall, and that, after all, the marvelous experiences of the new school only served to rehabilitate Mesmer's system. He had, therefore, until then, paid but little attention to those researches that had excited an entire new generation. Nevertheless, he was not entirely a stranger to the problems recently attacked, and sometimes in the evenings, in his apartments on the fourth floor of his house on the Boulevard-Clichy, he spent a pleasant hour reading the works of those physicians who made a specialty of the encephalon.

"I read them as I would a novel," the good old man would say, with a sarcastic chuckle.

And yet, though he clung firmly to the *old game of medicine*, as he expressed it, these sudden openings of new worlds disturbed him; without, however, making him incredulous. He simply asked himself if these new *savants* had added anything to the art of healing by their remarkable researches.

"Shall we have more, or shall we have less of these disquieting maladies after their experiments?" he would say. "That is the whole question."

But now, for the first time, the studies of these new scholars appeared to him with a practical utility; and a word, a single word fallen from his colleague's lips, caused a commotion in his brain like the leaven in the dough. As he walked homeward, all the works he had read, all the impressions he had experienced, crowded into his brain with startling vividness, and he hurried on, anxious to be once more alone in his study, that he might

read over again all the works bearing on that suggestion of which Lucie Lorin was perhaps the victim.

"Is Monsieur ill?" asked the old house-keeper in alarm as he entered, his face flushed by mental agitation.

"No, Julie, I am not ill," he replied, absently.

"But, Monsieur, you look very strange!" persisted the woman. "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing has happened," he said, as he hastened to his study and closed the door behind him.

Here he spent long hours poring over volumes through which he had merely glanced inattentively a short time previous. From accounts of experiments at the *Salpêtrière*, he passed on to translations from foreign writings; seeking as eagerly as he had done when a student for the truth in the pages of these books; and it was indeed a touching sight to see this sexagenarian's stooped figure bending

over pamphlets and moldy volumes, seeking the salvation of a beloved creature in a science which he had formerly scoffed at in the intensity of his impenitent spiritualism.

“After all there may be some truth in it,” he murmured, incoherently. “If it should be true! An idea suggested, an impulsive force and perhaps—Lucie—”

Then seeking, comparing, eagerly scanning his books, he went back as far as James Braid, who, as early as 1841, had already made decisive experiments; he consulted Charcot, Heidenhain, Dumontpallier, Ch. Richet, J. Luys, Azan, Burnheim, Liegeois, Voisin, Liebrault, and the possibility of hypnotic suggestion of that capture of one being by another, as Dr. Descourtis called it, of the taking possession of a conscience by an external will, gradually became clearer to him.

It seemed clearly proven to him now—to him who would have denied the phenomenon the day before—yes, proven that a human being might undergo in a manner, an inter-

mittance of conscience, obey a morbid conception imposed by another; and, while in a state of hypnotic wakefulness, lend himself to a series of actions which had none of the automatism of somnambulism. It appeared evident to him, as he continued his reading with the determination of finding Lucy innocent, it seemed certain to him that the poor girl had obeyed the will of a suggester, that she was the unconscious instrument of an unknown criminal.

The good Doctor was not a little startled, and uttered several exclamations of incredulity as he perused these works and passed from one doctrine to another. What! it was possible to thus experiment with a human being, to mold the brain as if it were so much putty, deform it and transform it at pleasure?

More astonishing, more incredible and ironical still was the fact that it was possible—the human brain being double—to suppress the activity of one of the cerebral hemispheres, or give to each a different degree of activity. Different hallucinations might even be created

in each, so that in the cerebral duality, one side of the brain might hate while the other adored, or the same creature might be swayed by thoughts of honesty on the left, and on the right be haunted by ideas of vice or thoughts of crime.

Poor Pomeroy shuddered as he read, and the perspiration bathed the roots of the scanty hair that fringed his bald head.

“It seems that idealists like myself are only imbeciles,” he muttered. “And yet conscience is above science—right is right, evil is evil!—What a queer machine man is!”

But if the living creature could be made to submit to the will of another in hypnotism, or the slumber produced by magnetism (for all these things were but animal magnetism under new and scientific names) could not magnetism also cure the evils it produced?

In one of Th. Ribot's works he found the case of a messenger who, while in this hypnotic state, mislaid a package entrusted to him, and could not find it when re-awakened, but hav-

ing been once more plunged into a mesmeric slumber he went directly to the place where he had left it during his first delirium. And the old doctor concluded that on the same principle the human being could no doubt be brought to a recollection of what had passed in a former crisis by submitting him to a sort of test, which consisted of hypnotizing him anew.

It merely required a second slumber to discover the secrets of the first.

"Then—if I should hypnotize Lucie?" he exclaimed, suddenly starting up.

Yes, pathological memory would perhaps give the judge the key to the enigma. "I was obliged to do so! I was obliged to do so!" The young girl had been obliged to go to M. de la Berthiere's house at Versailles! and why?

"Circumstances which are forgotten when awake are recalled when in this hypnotic state," affirmed one of the authorities consulted by Pomeroy.

Then why should he not attempt to reproduce the scene of the tragedy before Lucie's

own eyes—or better still, before the eyes of her judges?

“It is incredible!” thought the old man, “had anyone told me this morning that I would contemplate having recourse to such practices, I would have laughed in his face—I was then an unbeliever. It was all brought about by that devilish word: *suggested*—*suggested*—and if it were true? If that child had really committed a crime when under the spell of another’s will?”

It was a complete overthrow of all his beliefs, a sudden sweeping away of all his scientific deductions. But the good doctor was not headstrong. And besides, it was a question of Lucie’s fate!

She might be innocent, not only of the act, but in conscience even. Conscience, that invisible flame which casts an interior light upon the mysteries, the doubts, the abysses of moral life, sometimes resists suggestions.

“One must lie, lie skillfully to that sleeping conscience to dominate it,” thought Pome-

roy. "For honesty still continues to struggle, even in that state of subjection!"

"Ah! the poor child!" he added, his thoughts going rapidly to Lucie, "how she must have struggled if she really underwent the impulsion of another's will!"

After a few hours spent in study and in reading works of this kind, he had worked himself into such a fever that he was forced to go out for a walk on the boulevard to drive away the congestion which threatened him. It seemed to him that all that was passing around him, all that was printed in those reviews, those books, those pamphlets—the cases of hysteria mentioned by Bottet or others, Lucie's arrest and the interrogation at the *Prefecture de police*—belonged to some fantastic world, and that they had no existence in fact. It was like a fabulous universe, peopled with absurd and feverish visions that scoffed at his optimism. But, after all, since the evil existed—and he was forced to admit that point—why should he not undertake to combat it

with evil? If a suggestion could lead to crime, why could it not be utilized for the punishment of it?

“What nonsense!” he ejaculated, as he reached this knotty point in his meditations.

“But no, it is not nonsense!” he added in a decided tone. “Either the phenomenon exists or it does not exist. If it exists, I oppose it with its own resources and combat it with its own forces!”

The good old man slept but little that night, and long before the hour fixed for the official examination the next morning he started in the direction of the prison physician's home. He was at a loss to know in what manner he should broach the subject, fearing to make himself somewhat ridiculous, for what he was about to propose was something decidedly strange and out of the common practice. He, who had always professed an instinctive horror of what he termed the nonsensical prattle of hypnotism, was now about to proclaim to this

learned physician that, after all, hypnotism might contain an atom of truth, and that this atom perhaps contained the proof of Lucie's non-culpability.

"He will think me an old fool!" he muttered, as he hurried on.

To his great astonishment, however, his illustrious colleague did not receive his suggestion as ridiculous; neither did he seem shocked or express surprise to find so bold a project conceived beneath the old man's long white locks.

"What I have said then does not seem too scandalous to you?" ventured Pomeroy, timidly.

"Not at all," replied his friend. "I had precisely the same thought when I left you yesterday. Lucie Lorin is evidently under the spell of some external fascination, and, perhaps, as you say, my dear Pomeroy, hypnotism may—"

"Oh! you must not believe that I place very much faith in hypnotism," interrupted the old

doctor quickly. "I will even admit that I have barely looked into the matter, and have given the question but little study, for it has always inspired me with distrust. But we must not shut the door against progress, merely because it is something new. We are growing older, and we have already seen many improbable things in science and politics during our life-time. The child now in the cradle will no doubt live to see some things still more startling. The telephone and phonograph are very pretty miracles which would have caused Edison to be burned as a wizard a few hundred years ago—I am ready to accept hypnotism, if it exists! It will not prevent me from retaining my former faith; for you know my dear friend, it is perhaps simple, but I still believe in God!"

"Very good," said his companion, who was a follower of Voltaire. "We shall see if he is on Lucie Lorin's side!"

He then informed Pomeroy that they must immediately go before the Judge of Instruction

and state the case to him. These two honest physicians were fully of the opinion that Lucie Lorin, whom they knew to have been weak and nervous from childhood, must have obeyed the impulsion or the suggestion of some other person's will, and that she would persist in her silence; clinging to her irritating reply of: "I was obliged to do so!" in spite of all the efforts of justice to make her speak. They were convinced that she would be tried and condemned without giving any other explanation; and that the unfortunate girl would continue in her tragic hallucination even in the gloomy silence of a prison cell.

And it was for these two physicians, one representing law, the other mercy, to unite in supplicating justice to allow science to lend the assistance of its experiences to the researches of the instruction. What the police would no doubt never discover, medicine would perhaps find. It was an unusual petition, without precedent—for it was not a question of mental alienation, but of magnetism—and it concerned

the life of a human creature, a question of equity and public vindication at the same time. The judge could not refuse such a prayer.

“But if he should refuse?” asked the old doctor, anxiously.

“He will not refuse,” replied his friend, in a tone of conviction. “I will prepare at once to accompany you to his office.”

An hour later they were seated in the examining magistrate’s private study, deeply immersed in the details of their project.

Jean Mornas little imagined what was taking place; and, notwithstanding his agonies or the pain he experienced at the thought that this child whom he loved so deeply was in prison, he reassured himself at each new terror which crossed his brain by the conviction that she would not speak, and that the truth would never be known.

Lucie’s silence was his hope, his certainty of salvation.

He calculated that the result of the trial would be that either the prosecution would be

unable to prove Lucie's guilt, and the jury would acquit her, or that science would prove insanity, and the irresponsible young girl would not even be sent to the court of assizes.

Then another thought suddenly occurred to Mornas, *insanity!*—Yes, of course! But that signified the mad-house for the unfortunate girl. A prison more terrible than the other; sinister and peopled with frightful visions!

And it was he who condemned this pretty young girl, whose lips had attracted his kisses, to the four walls of a maniac's cell. In the company of all those mad people, Lucie would also become mad!

He shuddered at the thought.

"If I could but rescue her!" he exclaimed. "But how—By simply giving myself up to the authorities!"

"Yes, but if—and why not? Lucie shall be acquitted; what is the use of sacrificing myself?"

Lucie was not yet condemned, and she would perhaps escape entirely; at all events, he would still have time to save her if necessary.

In the meantime, he wearied his body with fatiguing exercises and long walks to escape from his thoughts, to occupy his days, to enliven his solitude. Wherever he went, he carried his treasure closely pressed against his breast, even at the risk of losing it in the jostlings of the crowded streets. Wherever he went, he carried his fortune—and his remorse; or rather his anxiety, the anxiety of what tomorrow might bring forth for Lucie.

Through a sentiment of ferocious bravado—or of fear perhaps—he had given himself the sinister pleasure of assisting at M. de la Berthiere's obsequies at Versailles.

He had seen Rue Saint-Mederic thronged with people and had listened to the silly babble around the old miser's coffin. M. de la Berthiere was little regretted. Curiosity alone had brought all these people, who lined the streets leading to the church to see the cortege pass. An old skinflint who would have haggled over an egg, or split a farthing in four—a selfish man, who would not give a *sou* to the

poor, whose purse was closed as tightly as his door!—Of what use was he in the world?—If it were true that he had seduced the woman who had killed him, she had done perfectly right—the wretched creature!—Such were the expressions that fell upon Mornas' ears; and if he had felt any remorse, these obsequies would have dissipated it; were they not the very justification of his plan of combat? He, young vigorous, eloquent, had suppressed this useless being, had confiscated a portion of his idle wealth.—Had the world suffered any real loss because this old bed-ridden man was now lying between four boards under that black pall? Remorse?—No, Jean experienced none. He assisted at all this as if at a theater. The money taken from the dead man lay against his breast; but he argued that the vanquisher always despoiled his bleeding adversary on the field of battle. It was simple enough, and only just perhaps!

And audaciously, or rather prudently, he searched the throng gathered about the funeral

car for the nephew who had recommended him to M. de la Berthiere as a competent assistant for the compilation of the work on *Medicine Among the Arabs*. It was important that this nephew and the servants of the house should see him there, and have no occasion to express surprise at the absence of "Monsieur's secretary." When approached, the dead man's nephew pressed Jean's hand with singular vivacity, scarcely dissimulating his joy—the joy of an heir—in the correct bow and discreet smile with which he greeted his former fellow-student. The other mourning relatives grouped around the nephew had succeeded in concealing the same sentiment under an assumed demeanor of sorrowful regret; but Jean understood that they were merely inspired by motives of policy, and that they were as eager as the other to enjoy the old man's fortune.

Leaving the little knot of hypocritical mourners, he sought out the valet and engaged in conversation with him concerning the particulars of the tragedy.

“It was all very quickly and quietly done,” said the man, as he walked on at Mornas’ side a few paces behind the hearse. “The woman came to the door bringing a letter for Monsieur, which she said must be delivered at once—I carried the letter in and was told to show the woman into the study and leave them alone.

“I ushered her in and closed the door, leaving them together—I remarked that she was very pretty; and if Monsieur had been younger, I might have thought—”

The valet smiled knowingly; then remembering that the corpse was almost beside him, he cut short his suppositions.

“She came out again in about five minutes,” he resumed, more soberly; “and as I opened the door to let her out, I don’t remember remarking anything strange in her, save that she seemed preoccupied and hurried. The carpet having deadened the sound of the fall, I had heard no noise, and consequently did not go to the study for some time afterward—When I found him lying there dead, I searched the

room for the letter brought by the girl, in the hope of finding out something; but my search was in vain, she had taken it with her; and had it not been for the envelope accidentally dropped at the railway station, we should never have found any trace of her!—And even as it is,” he concluded, “though the woman is in custody, no convicting evidence has yet been discovered against her. It’s all very mysterious, to say the least.”

While listening to the man’s description of the tragic events, Mornas’ artistic nature was lost in admiration of the marvelous precision unconsciously displayed by Lucie in the accomplishment of the suggested act. The most perfect of chronometers could not have worked more methodically. She had done what she had been commanded to do; and when an unexpected obstacle had risen in her path she had unhesitatingly thrust it out of her way. That she would continue to obey the suggestion imposed on her, he could not doubt. Never would his name escape her

lips. Even in the days of torture, no power could have unsealed the lips of a creature thus dominated and subdued.

As he gazed at the faces of the curious throng and listened to the conversation of the indifferent followers in the funeral procession, he felt a sentiment of mingled irony and bravado possess his heart; and though he had actually, though involuntarily, killed the man they were bearing to his last rest, he experienced a sort of pride in figuring in the front ranks of the cortege, in deriding, by his audacity and contempt, the timidities, modesties and honest hypocrisies of the crowd that jostled him.

The coffin was but a mass of flowers, the whole gloom of mourning and death had disappeared beneath a profusion of wreaths brought by relatives and servants; and as the procession slowly wended its way to the city of the dead, the wind wafted a subtile odor of violets to those behind, and delicate flowery petals and lilac blossoms were strewn on the pavement of the street.

Still in his mood of raillery, Jean was thinking of the antithesis of this rotting corpse and those fragrant blossoms, of that shriveled body lying there enshrouded beneath such an abundance of perfumed flowers; and it seemed to him that the lilacs also scoffed at the old miser's funeral. Why was it that so much beauty was wasted on the coffin of an old ego-tist?

"Harpagon blossoming like Ophelia," he muttered, derisively. "The mandarin has the funeral of a young virgin; and for want of tearful eyes, the flowers weep!" he added, gazing at the ground strewn with the petals fallen from the wreaths.

He remained to the last, and did not turn away until M. de la Berthiere's coffin had been lowered into the grave.

CHAPTER XII.

THE fast express was dashing along with its usual dizzying speed toward Versailles, bearing among its passengers a young woman dressed in a modest black gown and carefully guarded by a party of five men, two of whom wore the badges of their office. The girl quietly submitted to their guidance, obeying mechanically, seemingly lost in reverie and unconscious of her surroundings. Seeing her the object of so much attentive watching, the employes of the Gare Montparnasse had at first supposed her to be a lunatic who was being transferred to the asylum, but they had been quickly deceived by the station-master.

“She is not a lunatic by any means!” he said, shaking his head ominously. “She is the woman who murdered that helpless old man at Versailles.”

The Judge of Instruction had at last consented to send Lucie Lorin to the scene of the tragedy, accompanied by Doctor Pomeroy and the prison physician. The other travelers were two police officers; while two detectives followed by the same train in a second-class compartment.

Lucie silently watched the fields, the houses, the leafless trees and the bright sun melting away the last traces of snow; while Doctor Pomeroy closely scrutinized the innocent childish countenance, trying to decipher the hidden thoughts and wondering how, with such a pure, angelic face, she could be even suspected of a crime!

When the good doctor naively propounded the question to the chief of the detective bureau, who sat opposite him, the officer shrugged his shoulders significantly and laughed.

“My dear doctor,” he said, “it is evident that you know little of vice. The face proves nothing; the most innocent looking have been known to strangle both father and mother!”

Pomeroy's optimism had received rude shocks during the few preceding days. But notwithstanding appearances, he still obstinately refused to believe the girl a criminal. And what was more he would prove it! A flood of ideas surged in the old doctor's head and his heart throbbed to bursting since the perception of a possible suggestion, of a responsible complicity, had occurred to him.

It had required all the eloquence and scientific authority of the prison physician to obtain permission to attempt the experiment determined upon. The eminent man had begged that the girl should not be confronted with the corpse of M. de la Berthiere, declaring that she was ill, in a sort of lethargic state, and that all tragic sensation might cause a morbid crisis. Besides, why should justice demand this needless torture, since Lucie denied nothing, admitted the crime with a sort of obstinate bravado, in fact?

At the same time he claimed the right to try the experiment, which he hoped would

prove decisive; urgently requesting that he and Pomeroy be allowed to question the prisoner in their own way, according to the means they thought proper to employ, and in the victim's room at Versailles. Had not the physician of the Salpêtrière recently proved the innocence of a man, by demonstrating that the poor devil was a somnambulist, and that the crime he was accused of had been committed while in the unconscious, irresponsible state of somnambulism? The testimony admitted by a court of appeal, might assuredly be permitted by a magistrate of M. Warnier's intelligence!

M. Warnier had therefore finally yielded to these persuasive arguments; and Doctor Pomeroy was experiencing the strongest emotions of his life on that memorable day as the train sped toward Versailles. The experiment he was about to make seemed a far greater undertaking than the operation he had formerly performed to save Lucie Lorin from the croup. To prove the innocence of an accused being,

to wash a stain from a pure soul, was a sublime, heroic deed! The worthy man trembled beforehand, almost hesitating at the hazardous step determined upon.

And what if the experiment ended in establishing Lucie's culpability? If he were to lose, instead of saving her? His heart almost stood still at the horrible thought, and his blood turned cold in his veins.

But then, was she not lost, absolutely lost if not torn from this accusation, if her strange mental state remained unexplained? The officers, detectives, even the judge, though liberal minded, would have staked their reputation on her guilt. Even the prison surgeon, who had insisted on the examination, had little faith in the girl's innocence.

"She may possibly have been unconscious," he said, "but she certainly struck the blow."

A carriage was in waiting at Versailles, and the party was at once conveyed to Rue Saint-Mederic. The Judge of Instruction immediately led the way to the library which M. de

la Berthiere had almost constantly occupied, and the others followed. Lucie started as she entered the room, and her whole frame shook as if agitated by a violent spasm.

"Courage," whispered the kind old doctor, gently.

She made an effort to control her emotion, and leaned against the book-shelves for support; standing there motionless, her haggard eyes fixed on the low bed where she had seen the emaciated, cadaverous, old man on that day.

It seemed to her he was still lying there, or rather sitting bolt upright, his long, skeleton hand stretched toward her. Then her eyes mechanically turned to the bottom of the shelves in search of the spot where he must have fallen, and it seemed to her that she saw a dark stain on the light carpet.

Was it ink or blood?

The Judge of Instruction seated himself before a table, and spread his papers on it, while the clerk placed himself near the small stand

on which M. de la Berthiere had kept his acoustic tube, now hanging useless on the wall.

The prison physician stood facing Lucie, his eyes fixed attentively on her face, while Pome-roy, pale and agitated, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, as if in a troubled dream.

Standing on the threshold, their arms folded and their eyes roaming curiously around the incumbered room, the two officers silently awaited the orders of their chief, while in the adjoining salon appeared the curious faces of the servants, craning their necks to peer into the room, as if the mere inspection of the scene could give them a foretaste of the coming tragedy.

“Do you recognize this room?” asked the Judge of Instruction, abruptly, after a long, painful silence.

He was addressing Lucie, gazing fixedly at her and giving this first question the clearness and distinctness of an attack.

“Yes, Monsieur,” replied the young girl, firmly.

“Was M. de la Berthiere on this bed when you entered?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Where were you? Tell me the exact spot on which you stood when M. de la Berthiere greeted you?”

“I was just about where I am standing now!” said Lucie, who was gradually regaining the implacable firmness of her usual replies.

“Tell us what passed between you and him.”

She fixed her dark pupils on M. Warnier with a singular fixedness; then, with the gesture corresponding to each word, she advanced toward the bed on which she had seen M. de la Berthière.

“I came straight in—” she said, slowly. “He had placed the letter I had brought on the table beside him—where that gentleman is writing now—He addressed me two or three questions—and as I knew he could not see, I crouched down there, near those books to take—what I had to take—While I was searching he heard me—he arose, dragged himself to that

place and tried to prevent me from—from getting what I wanted—I struggled, and pushed him away. He struck his head there—and fell—and—that—is all!”

“All?” repeated the judge, coldly. “You then admit, once more, that you came here with the object of robbing this unfortunate man?”

“Robbing?” she echoed.

She shuddered from head to foot, and her frightened eyes dilated with a wild expression in their depths.

“I!—Rob him?” she repeated, her pale face becoming ghastly.

“What were you doing, if not trying to rob him? What were you searching for among those books?”

“I was searching—searching for what I was to find there—for what I was to take away.”

“For bank-notes?—Several bills, which you had forgotten, were picked up on the floor, near the books you opened.”

The kind old doctor suffered as much, or perhaps more, than Lucie through this inter-

rogatory, which confused her so cruelly and was so surely turning against her. He had expected an explanation, a cry, a word of proof, a flash of innocence, in fact he knew not what; but she remained as if petrified in her will, with the same invariable, seemingly cynical answer: "Do not ask me! I can not even defend myself! What is done is done, and I have only done what I had to do!"

They still plied her with questions, trying to discover what had become of the bank-notes.

"They have been put where you can not find them. That man had stolen them, and I recovered them," she returned, firmly.

"And where is the letter you used to gain an entrance into M. de la Berthiere's room?" asked the judge.

"I took it away with me, tore it up and burnt it when I reached home."

"But what was in the letter?"

"That, you shall never know. Besides, I don't know myself."

The Judge of Instruction and the chief officer

looked at each other, as if asking an explanation of this obstinacy; while the clerk wrote on mechanically, without even raising his head.

With the sudden resolution of the timid, determined to hesitate no longer, Doctor Pomeroy stepped quickly forward, saying: "Let me question her—I entreat you."

Then going straight to Lucie, he clasped her two hands in his and gazed fixedly at her.

"Come, my child," he said, gently, "you will tell me—will you not?" —

"What?" she interrupted, with nervous irritation.

"The truth, the truth, child!"

"The truth?—I have told the truth."

She tried to remove her fingers from his clasp and turned away her head, as if the firmness she had sustained before the judge were deserting her suddenly before her old friend.

The prison physician was curiously following this moral duel engaged between the old doctor and the young girl.

Lucie instinctively shrank from Pomeroy's straightforward glance, and her gentle blue eyes became haggard and frightened, as if fearing the doctor's pupils would pursue and trace their secret thoughts, search their depths to find the hideous secret—drag it out as we drag out a drowned being from the depths of a lake. She shrank from his gaze, from his questions; while he resolutely persevered, hoping terror itself might serve to save her.

“Look at me! Look at me!” he commanded, authoritatively, in that resolute tone he had used when she was a child and he had performed the delicate operation on her throat which had saved her life. And though so gentle always, he now almost roughly forced her to look at him.

Doctor Pomeroy was under the influence of one of the most violent emotions ever experienced by him. The first time he had touched the cold flesh and opened the veins of a corpse, he had nearly swooned away; a similar shud-

der now crept over him as he tightly clasped the girl's icy hands in his.

But, in spite of his agitation, he felt that he must attempt the experiment agreed upon, and not attempt only, but succeed, as well.

He had at last constrained the young girl to remain motionless before him, and he was gazing fixedly into her eyes. He vaguely felt that she was half conquered, that his volition dominated the resistance of this brain, even the rebellion of this young, nervous frame.

The fall of a pin might have been heard in this chamber where M. de la Berthiere had hitherto coughed and gasped in his death struggle; and Lucie's panting breath was plainly heard in the awful silence that reigned, by the anxious men assembled there.

Doctor Pomeroy was assembling all his forces, throwing all his hopes in a new science in which he only half believed, and driving his own will into the wild, dilated eyes before him. He felt something like a sensation of shame invading him. It seemed to him as though he

were taking advantage of the conscience of a human being, as if this conflict between the material and the ideal were the robbing of a will. Although Lucie was still watchful, he felt that she was slowly falling under the influence of this new power into that state which he so ardently desired.

Suddenly, the girl's head drooped on her left shoulder, her eyelids closed, and she remained motionless.

"She is in a state of catalepsy!" said the prison physician.

Pomeroy released the hands, but Lucie remained as if petrified. He raised the eyelids; the pupils were fixed and dilated.

"We might place a light near the eyes, and the lids would not even wink," said the prison physician, approaching nearer.

The Judge of Instruction was looking on the scene as if he were the spectator of a theatrical drama, while the officers who stood at the door gazed at the girlish figure with skeptical smiles.

With a slight touch Pomeroy assured himself of that neuro-muscular hyperexcitability which characterizes catalepsy. He then made her traverse the successive stages of hypnotism, lethargy and somnambulism. This was the decisive phase for the problem he had to solve. From this dominated, conquered being, this conscience, which might be molded at will, he must demand a hidden secret, demand it with the authority of a master, as though he had the right to read the open pages of that brain and soul.

How often he had spoken of hypnotic suggestion with doubt and derision; and yet he was about to use this power to find the unknown, the redoubtable unknown quantity of a problem before justice: A crime had been committed; who had committed that crime?

"Lucie," began the old doctor, with a slight tremor in his voice, "listen to what I say—This is M. de la Berthiere's room, do you recognize it?"

"Yes," responded the girl, who saw only

in recollection; for her eyes were blind to her surroundings.

"You came here to speak to M. de la Berthiere?" continued her old friend.

"Yes," repeated Lucie, in a suppressed voice.

"Who sent you?"

"Who?"

"Yes."

"No one."

"Impossible! You did not come of your own free will.--Try to remember."

"Command her!" suggested his colleague.

"Speak! you must speak!" commanded the old physician, imperatively. "It was not you who thought of coming to Versailles! It was not you!"

"No!--it was not--"

"Who told you to come?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

She hesitated and struggled as if, even in her somnambulic state, the primary injunc-

tion imposed on her still persisted, remained imperishable; and her sleeping conscience rebelled against the betrayal of an order.

"You must place her under the influence of a new suggestion," observed the prison physician.

"Yes, I must try!" rejoined Pomeroy, irritably.

Large beads of perspiration stood on his brow, and his ideas were becoming confused as they sometimes are in absurd dreams when the images are diffused and moving. He was asking himself if all this were real: this chamber, the judge, the officers, and himself standing there—he, the unbeliever, trying magnetic experiments on Lucie—it all seemed lost in a troubled, distant perspective, or melted in the misty atmosphere of a dream.

And, nevertheless, from this chaos there must emerge a guiding ray of light, a fixed, obstinate idea: Lucie must be made to speak; the name, the deed, the truth must be torn from her.

“Lucie!” he said, sternly, all irresolution having now disappeared from his voice and manner, “listen to me.—You are no longer in Versailles—you are in Paris, in Paris, do you hear?”

“In Paris?” she repeated.

“Yes, in your own room, Rue Audrain—You are going to Versailles. You are dressing and thinking. What are you thinking of?”

There was no answer from the pale, rigid figure.

“What are you thinking of?” repeated Pomeroy.

“What am I thinking of?”

She instinctively repeated the question, not to find a reply, but to gain time, as though she felt pushed to the wall in this duel of the *will* and wished to evade the conflict or fly.

“Yes,” assented her old friend, trying to emphasize the exact point he wished to keep in view; “before leaving for Versailles, you are thinking of what you must do there—You know that you shall find M. de la Berthiere?”

"Yes."

"Why do you want to see M. de la Berthiere?"

"Because I must see him!"

"Do you know him?"

"I have never seen him."

"Never?"

"Never."

"There is then no reason why you should feel any resentment toward him?"

"I! feel resentment toward him? Why? What harm has M. de la Berthiere done me?"

"Then why do you want to strike him?"

"I am not thinking of striking him. I am thinking of the papers I must take from the atlas."

"What atlas?"

"Behind the books."

The chief officer pointed to the tumbled pile of books on the last shelf of the library, where Lucie had searched.

"How do you know there are papers there?" resumed the old doctor.

"I know it, that's all."

“ Who told you ? ”

“ Some one. ”

“ Who ? ”

“ The—the person who gave me the letter intended for M. de la Berthiere. ”

“ A man or a woman ? ”

The spectators of the scene were gazing intently at the girl's face, watching every twitch of the muscles.

“ Most astonishing indeed, ” whispered the judge to the chief.

“ A man or a woman ? ” repeated Pomeroy.

A wild expression flitted over the young girl's face, and a sudden contraction of the eyebrows gave the soft blue eyes a wicked gleam.

“ A man ! ” she replied, sharply.

“ Why did that man give you the letter ? ” pursued the doctor, quickly.

“ Why ?—Why ? ” she repeated, evasively, with the same rebellious, almost ferocious expression.

A remnant of will, dominated by the primi-

tive suggestion, was evidently rebelling in this childish soul.

Gathering all his force of volition, Pomeroy then guided Lucie to the deed he wished her to commit in the sight of all; commanding her to live over the words and actions of the scene which had taken place in that room.

Having reached the threshold, the girl hesitated a moment, turned her eyes on the low bed, then walked toward it and handed an imaginary letter to an imaginary M. de la Berthiere. Turning quickly back, she stooped near the shelf she had already designated, took up the atlas and drew invisible bank-notes from between its pages, going through the motion of slipping the notes into her pocket. Suddenly, an expression of terror crept over her face; believing she felt the bony fingers of the murdered man clutching her shoulders, she pushed back the specter and seized the letter she had brought as a pretext; then with a last glance at the motionless, bleeding body, her imagination, or rather Pomeroy's will, conjured up, she dashed from the room.

The old doctor's heart was throbbing wildly, while the astonished spectators held their breath.

"Where are you going now?" he resumed.
"Go, walk on."

Lucie walked swiftly through the room, as if fleeing; then, believing she had reached the station, she went through the motion of buying a ticket, and sank into a chair as though it were the seat of a compartment, where she crouched like a hunted animal. In a few minutes she arose, and walked to and fro, the walls of the room seeming like high houses to her; then she suddenly stopped, hesitated, and entered an imaginary place.

"Where are you?" asked the doctor.

"Where am I?"

"Yes."

There was still the same prudent hesitation, the same persistent rebellion.

"Rue Racine," she finally said.

"She believes herself there; and, in fact, she is really there," observed the prison physician.

The Judge of Instruction glanced inquiringly at the clerk, who answered with a smile: "I have made a note of it."

"He must be a student!" murmured the chief.

"Rue Racine?—The number?" questioned Pomeroy.

"The number?"—she made an effort to remember, but did not succeed. "I don't know," she replied. "I really don't know!"

"Try to remember!"

"When I tell you that I don't know!" she cried, fiercely.

"Don't insist," put in the prison physician, "you might induce an attack of hysteria.—"

"Is she asleep?" interrupted the judge gruffly, as if shaking off a nightmare.

"No; she is in a state of somnambulism," replied the physician.

"This is simply the magnetism of the charlatan. Are you sure she is not acting a part?" continued the judge.

"Command her to go to the door," said the the physician, addressing his colleague.

“Go to the door!” commanded Pomeroy to the girl.

She walked away like an automaton, and stood near the door.

“Now,” said the prison physician, addressing the officers who stood on the threshold, “take her by the wrists and hold her with all your strength!”

“We shall hold her safely enough,” returned one of the men. “I can guarantee that she will not escape.”

“Very well—Now, Pomeroy, call her back.”

The two men tightened their strong, sinewy fingers around the delicate wrists of the poor girl, who seemed but a frail child between these robust, broad-shouldered officers of the law.

“Lucie,” said Pomeroy, simply, “come to me, Lucie!”

He had raised his hand, and with a movement as irresistible as the action of a distending steel spring, the frail girl thrust back the two burly officers; and while one picked up

his hat with a forced laugh, the other gazed in terror at this delicate child who had escaped from their strong grasp and was now standing rigidly before the old doctor, who was also almost terrified at his power.

“The name! ask her the name!” cried the judge, carried away by this phenomenal obedience.

“Yes, the name!” repeated the chief.

Pomeroy took the girl’s hands in his once more, and clasping them nervously, looked straight into her eyes.

“Now Lucie,” he said, “who sent you here? Whom did you obey? Who advised you? Who drove you to come? Who remitted you that letter for M. de la Berthiere? Who?”

But she still struggled against his will, influenced still by the obsession of the primitive order she had accepted.

“Remember!—Or speak rather!” cried Pomeroy. “I want you to speak. Do you understand?—I want you to speak! You know the man who commanded you to come; you see

him at this moment, he is here—I tell you he is here—there, before you—Tell me his name! his name! his name! I want—”

But he stopped abruptly.

Tortured by the interior struggle, Lucie had fallen back and would have struck her head on the shelves had not the old doctor quickly caught her in his arms.

The prison physician rushed to his assistance, while the judge and the chief exchanged a significant glance. In the meantime Lucie was agitated by nervous spasms, her arms outstretched, her pale face distorted, and her unloosened hair enveloping her in a golden veil.

“All the symptoms of hysteria!” observed the surgeon. “We have laid too great a strain on the delicate chord, my dear Pomeroy. We have provoked a dangerous attack. But never mind; what we can not get to-day, we can obtain to-morrow—*Look for the woman in the case* is not always a true saying,” he added, turning to the judge. “When the crime is feminine, we must look for the man!”

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHANCE meeting on the street brought Jean Mornas face to face with Dr. Pomeroy on the following day. At any other time the young man would have avoided the old physician, whom he considered insignificant and unbearable with his idealism and virtues, but on this occasion he listened to the worthy man's conversation with sudden and deep interest.

Pomeroy suddenly recalled having seen him follow Mme. Lorin's coffin to the grave, and thinking Jean might be able to help him unravel the mystery surrounding the young girl's action, he linked his arm in his and they walked on side by side.

"My dear young man," he said, "I believe you can give me valuable information!—Have you seen Lucy Lorin very often since her mother's death?"

Jean looked up into the old man's honest face, wondering if the question did not conceal a trap.

"No," he replied, firmly. "I have not seen her at all!—Or, but occasionally, at least—I have sometimes met her by chance, as I met you to-day."

"Ah! what a pity!" murmured the old doctor. "You can not tell me whom she associated with, then? Have you heard of the accusation brought against her?"

"Yes," said Jean, feeling an icy chill invading his heart.

"I am thoroughly convinced of her innocence," continued Pomeroy, still walking on; "but the difficulty is to prove it!—poor child!"

Then with the confiding simplicity he showed in all things, he went on to relate the experiments tried at Versailles on the preceding day and the interrogatory undergone by the hypnotized girl.

Jean Mornas stopped short; and the strange

expression of his features astonished even the unsuspecting old doctor.

“What is the matter?” he queried.

“Nothing,” returned the young man, making an effort to conceal his emotion. “I admire your idea. To conquer suggestion by suggestion, is a grand conception.” then he added with a forced laugh: “This is hypnotic homeopathy.”

“Exactly what I said to myself.—But what is certain, is that if we did not succeed to-day, we shall some day! Such science is astounding!—To hold the key of a soul in one’s hand, think of it!—And I, who would not believe in it, calling it charlatanism!”

“Lucie Lorin is then —” began Jean, with parched lips and a fast beating heart.

“She is quite ill to-day,” put in the doctor. “She lies in a lethargic state, and my colleague feared a fatal complication if we persisted. We shall allow the frail body to rest; but in four or five days—and before that if possible—we shall have her secret. The poor

child must suffer terribly. The shock has brought on a nervous paroxysm, but we can cure that. What is far more to be feared is the accusation that threatens her.—But not a word of this, I beg you! If I speak of it, it is because I know you took great interest in both her mother and herself!”

Jean was leaning against the wall of Saint-Eustache, looking steadily at Pomeroy and asking himself how that white, simple, naive head could have conceived an idea similar to his own—an idea which now arose like a menace of death between success and himself.

He tried to congratulate the old doctor on his perspicacity, on the boldness of his plan, and spoke of Lucie. This attack of hysteria was not surprising; she had always been sensitive and nervous! Then he stopped short, fearing to say too much and betray the secret of his observations to this man of science. This would be to point out himself as the accomplice, the instigator of the crime; and he determined to bring the conversation to an ab-

rupt termination by taking his leave of the worthy old man.

“Will you accompany me to the courthouse?” asked Pomeroy, extending his hand.

“No! I have calls to make—business to attend to—” stammered Jean.

The old man walked rapidly away, leaving his companion standing motionless against the wall, gazing mechanically at a guard and repeating to himself: “It is all over now—Lucie will obey their suggestion as she obeyed mine, and reveal all!—She will tell what she has done—they will tear my name from her—and then—ah! then, Jean Mornas, you are lost!”—

Lost! Yes, most completely and assuredly lost! The doctor’s words came back to him, and he shuddered. He held “the key to that soul,” and in four or five days, the name of the guilty man—his name—would be divulged. The warrant for his arrest would then be issued. It seemed to him he already heard the scratching of the pen as it inscribed his name on the official paper.

He must fly! But where?—His thoughts instinctively turned to that far-off country where his old parents lived; and a strange, inexplicable longing to see them once more, to embrace them again, came over him. It was but a mere dim vision of the past. From there he would go to Italy by way of Villefranche. His desertion of Lucie did not seem cowardly now; danger threatened her no longer, for she would evidently prove her own innocence. How stupid he had been! Why had he not thought that hypnotism might condemn as well as serve him. But then, too, the death of the victim had disarranged all his plans. His dream had been to despoil the mandarin, not to kill him. The murder had spoiled it all; and whatever might come, he was lost.

Yes, he was absolutely lost if he did not disappear; if he did not place the frontier between himself and old Pomeroy's experiments. There was no time for hesitation, not a moment to lose. He returned to Rue Racine, went to the hotel, settled his account without saying a

word of his intended departure, and packed up what was most necessary. That same night he took the train for Nice, with the stolen money safely stowed away in his inside pocket.

With his face closely pressed against the pane of the window his anxious eyes piercing the surrounding shadows, he tried to guess, to penetrate, to question this Paris he was leaving behind—forever, perhaps—and which he had wanted to conquer.

“Deputy of Paris!” he murmured. “Alas! my dream is far from realized!”

His only object or dream now was to escape Parisian justice.

A flood of wrathful, bitter thoughts overwhelmed him. The game had turned against him. He might never again see this beautiful city, so implacable to starved beings—as he was yesterday—and so good a *courtisane* to those that paid. And he was leaving at the very moment when he could pay! What voluptuous pleasures surged there, in that black gloom, pierced here and there with glaring red

lights!—Bah! were not such pleasures found everywhere! But love, that passion which, in spite of yourself, enters your heart; that love which he, Jean Mornas, felt for Lucie, that deep, stupid love—in a word, *love*, where would he find it again?

“I do love her!” he repeated to himself, with ever-increasing anguish as each turn of the wheels bore him further and further from her.

Had he realized it sooner he would have remained to share her fate; he would have cried out to Pomeroy that very afternoon when they had stood in front of Saint-Eustache: “Do not torture her, do not question her, cease your researches, I am the guilty one!” But then how absurd it would have been! One does not throw the handle after the hatchet while the tree still stands, neither does one turn it against one’s self because weary of the task.

He gazed mechanically at his traveling companions: an aged actress going to seek fortune at Nice; a stout banker already snoring under

his fur-lined cap, and a young married couple, with hands clasped in each other's, her head pillowed on his shoulder, while he gazed vaguely out of the window with a much-bored expression on his features.

What baseness, villainy, or suffering might not be concealed in these commonplace types? Did they suspect him to be a man going south in search of immunity from punishment instead of sunshine?

He had not yet slept when dawn crept slowly over the wintry sky; and during the hours that followed he turned over a thousand projects in his weary head. One among the rest possessed particularly alluring attractions; it had been awakened by a conversation exchanged between the banker and the faded actress at the breakfast station.

"You are going to Monaco, Madame?" had asked the banker.

"Necessarily, Monsieur," she had laughed, "since my physician sends me south to *re-build* myself."

This stage witticism had inspired Jean Mornas. Monaco! Yes, that was the place! In one night he might double, nay increase his capital tenfold. After all, what were thirty-seven thousand francs? Nothing. The sum robbed from the murdered man now seemed paltry, absurd, useless, to this peniless youth of yesterday. If he could only use the money to procure his election to some post it might suffice, since it would be a means of providing for the future. But now that the soil of France was slipping away from beneath his feet, now that he must fly from pursuit and accusation, what was such a miserable, ridiculous sum? Nothing, nothing, nothing!

Why not attempt to increase it? Why not try his luck at the wheel?

"He who is unlucky in love is lucky at roulette," he chuckled to himself.

Then he thought of Lucie, whom he should never again see.

"Never! Why not?" he asked himself.

Once rich, he would go—he knew not where—but straight before him, to Egypt, to India, to some spot where in the odd promiscuousness of smuggled personalities, of fugitives of all nations, of conquered heroes of many battles—money, love, or politics—one could live under a false name, in a false world, but in true luxury! Indeed, the world was wide! If need be, he might go to China—behind the walls that close out the old world.

In China! Again his bantering, satirical humor asserted itself, insulting the memory of the old miser—who was now rotting in the cemetery at Versailles—in a parody of the poet, and he added, almost aloud:

“Over there—over there

To the yellow stream, where the mandarin is found!”

Once over there it mattered not where, in some corner of the world where he could live in comfort and luxury, forgetting Paris, that envied and scorned Paris, he would write to Lucie Lorin—who would then be free. Yes!

he would find some means of informing her of his whereabouts, of indicating the place of refuge, where he would await her, and where they would at last find happiness—How happy, oh! how happy they should be!

The rapid movement of the train spurred the activity of his brain, and lulled his dreams.

Inform Lucie? But how? He must find the means later. Might he not succeed through that absurd old doctor, Pomeroy, who, once the affair terminated, might perhaps lend his assistance? But, in the meantime, he must challenge fate, tempt fortune with his money. It was all or nothing! If he lost, he could find work at Suez, or Alexandria, it mattered not where! Soiling his hands in labor would not humiliate his pride over there, since he would only share the misery of the wretches around him. If he won—and he would win—then—well then! life would be worth living wherever his exile might be!

He took up his quarters at a small hotel near

the station at Nice; but he did not rest there long. Monaco attracted him as the beacon light attracts night birds. But as he intended to go to Italy from Monaco, he resolved to first see the country place where he had grown up, the little house on the road to Villefranche where his old parents lived. He therefore hired a cab, and his voice quivered in spite of himself as he gave the necessary directions to the coachman.

"On the road to the left," he explained, "after you have passed the *Batterie des Sans-Culottes*, near the grove—"

"The grove of olive trees?" interrupted the man. "Yes, I know the place. You mean the Mornas house. French people who have lived there for ever so long!"

"Yes, the Mornas house," assented Jean.

As they rolled rapidly along the smooth road, he asked himself if he should enter his old home and see his parents. He could not suddenly thrust the door open, embrace them, and leave them after an hour's conversation

only. His poor mother would try to retain him; and what innumerable questions his father would ask! He would question him about Paris, medicine, clients and his future prospects, and heaven alone knows what! And a delay of a few hours even might bring a telegraphic despatch and the *gendarmes* at the Mornas house. "The *gendarmes*?" he shuddered and laughed nervously. "And why not?"

He felt a strong inclination to order the coachman back to Nice. But might he not gaze at the little house from a distance; and then turn back carrying with him that bright sunshiny picture of his childhood days? And what a beautiful day it was!

The sky was clear and bright; the blue, murmuring sea glistened in the distance, and now and then he caught a glimpse of a blossoming garden as he rolled swiftly by. How many times he had played, romped, sung on this road in his boyhood!

Suddenly, like a vague, somber shadow, the

distorted face of M. de la Berthiere seemed to arise before him, appearing directly in his path at the turn of the road.

The coachman stopped. There among the trees, perched on the cliff and looking so white among the gray olives, Jean saw the red-roofed little house in which lived the people who had given him birth and whose name he bore.

A narrow, rocky path led to the little home, and as it was impossible to reach it with horses, Jean alighted.

“Wait for me,” he said to the coachman.

He then ascended the path slowly, his steps made heavy by recollections. Each bush, each shrub, each branch recalled a rent in his garments, a plucked flower or fruit. His heart throbbed to bursting as he neared the cottage; and as he reached the gate he shrank back, not daring to enter. Going cautiously around the house, he saw old Mornas sitting on the doorsteps, quietly smoking his pipe and gazing straight before him, far away over the vast blue sea,

Jean saw him distinctly through the shrubbery, and wondered if his mother were there too—she was not visible.

What if she were dead!

An icy chill numbed his heart, and his limbs almost bent under his weight at the terrible thought.

“Upon my word, I am becoming timid and nervous!” he said to himself. “Would I not know it if she were dead? Would my father be there?”

Just then she appeared on the threshold. Shielding her eyes with her hand, she gazed far away at the sea too, and he heard the almost forgotten voice exclaim:

“What a beautiful, beautiful day!”

The glad ring in her voice expressed her joy in living; and Jean asked himself why he should disturb this happy, peaceful existence. Why should he trouble them with his fears and anxieties?

How joyously he would have thrown his arms around the necks of these two beings,

whom he found much aged and broken down! —But life is cruel, alas!—Was it really worth the living?

He abruptly tore himself from the rusty gate, through which he had spied like a thief, and instinctively threw a kiss from his finger tips to the two old people. Then he hurried away, blinded by his tears and apostrophizing himself as stupid, sentimental, and ridiculous.

Once he turned back to gaze at the little house once more.

A tiny cloud of blue smoke emerged like a breath from among the trees; a light vapor that arose and dissipated like a mist in the bright sun—perfume of the family table that evaporated like a hope that dies away.

“To Nice!” ordered Jean Mornas, huskily, as he sank back in the seat of the carriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE thought of this light cloud of bluish smoke came back to Jean on the following night, when he staggered from the roulette table at Monaco, his face livid, and a dry, rebellious laugh on his lips. All was over! hope was at an end! The roulette had taken all, all, even to his last sou! Jean Mornas was unfortunate at play as well as in love!

"It makes me laugh!" he muttered aloud, as he turned in the direction of the hotel.

And he laughed again, with that wicked satirical laugh of other days—that laugh of bravado! But there was a tinge of sadness too in that merriment, an expression of rebellion combated and crushed down by pitiless fate.

Yes, ill luck had pursued him with exasperating animosity. He had lost continually, and

with hopeless persistency! Not once had his number or color come out, not once!

He again saw the roulette table, the whirlpool and the bored, impassible face of the *croupier*. Bills and gold coins flowed from his hands to be raked in by that ravenous rake stretched out like the claws of a bird of prey and greedy as a butcher's knife. His ears still buzzed with the murmur of the throng gazing stupidly at him, and his blood was still fired by the excitement of that eternally disputed game, ever renewed with a feverish pruriency of revenge, and tearing his fortune from him fraction by fraction, his heart shred by shred! Ruined! Wrecked!—All was now over, and in so few hours!

His well-planned structure had crumbled away! His crime had been useless! Nothing! nothing was left!

What was to be done?

Work? Yes, he had thought it possible while he still held the price of his crime in his hand; that insufficient sum he had tried to increase and lost. But now?

Work where? and how?

He must first fly, and he had barely enough to purchase food for a week!

What would become of him?

Flight and concealment are possible with money; the rich man awakens no suspicions, but the poor man is looked upon with distrust and doubt—and he was a pauper!

A *pauper*! the word stung him like a blow in the face, like a brand of infamy.

A *pauper*! What! recommence the struggle, climb the rugged path once more, drag the same weight at his feet, endure the same miseries, the same slights, the same bitter rancors—not counting the prison cell that yawned for him? No! no! no! a thousand times no!

The battle was lost! He might have been the prince of imbeciles and rascals; but he was only a fool and a scoundrel, since he had failed! The comedy was over, he must move on and make room for others!

He returned to the hotel and rang for pen and paper. After writing rapidly for nearly

an hour, he slipped one of the letters into his coat pocket, and left another and longer missive on the table where it could not fail to be seen. He then hurried out.

The letter which he left behind, and which was found the next day, was addressed: "*To Monsieur le Procureur de la Republique, Paris,*" and contained the truth concerning the death of M. de la Berthiere.

The missive he carried with him contained but two lines, an ironical explanation to his former companions who had applauded the theories, paradoxes, speeches and audacities of the Mandarin, in the wine shops of the *Quartier*. These were the words:

"Since the Mandarin must be killed, I kill him! It is I!

"JEAN MORNAS."

He went out on the terrace to breathe the fresh air, smoke a last cigar, inhale the perfume of the flowers, see the lengthening shadows of the palms, and gaze at the glistening peaceful sea in the pale moonlight.

How good it was to live. A snatch of song ascended to him, accompanied by laughter; a few couples passed silently by, clinging together like happy shadows, then vanished.

Jean smoked his cigar to the end, and cast it away when it burned his finger tips.

"Disagreeable!" he said, nonchalantly. "I may as well blow out my brains!"

He seated himself facing the sea, felt for the exact spot of his heart: "Since I have one!" he laughed a little bitterly, and pressed his finger on the trigger of a revolver. A detonation rang through the night, frightening the sleeping birds who fled over the sea.

CHAPTER XV.

THE following day, at the very hour when the Monaco authorities were preparing the inquest over the suicide, a despatch from Paris was received at headquarters, ordering the arrest of Jean André Mornas accused of theft and murder.

Lucie Lorin had spoken.

Doctor Pomeroy had torn the name of the guilty man from the lips of the hypnotized girl.

The old couple who inhabit the little cottage on the road to Villefranche read so little and live such a lonely existence, that they may never have heard that Jean, their little Jean, their pride and affection, over whom they still weep, was accused of a crime at the time of his death.

Truth, as well as calumny, sometimes pauses, hesitating and trembling, on the threshold of a saddened home.

Lucie Lorin still lives, sad, nervous and delicate. She has retained but a vague, incomplete recollection of the terrible reality of the past, scarcely more than the memory of a nightmare. But the shock to her nervous system still subsists. Doctor Pomeroy, who gives her shelter and care, has sworn to cure her and bring back the bloom to her pale cheeks.

"I was born to be a father, Julie," he sometimes says to his old housekeeper, "and behold, I have a daughter without the incumbrance of a wife!"

The worthy man is totally unconscious of the gossips and conjectures of the Boulevard de Clichy. But then, these malicious comments would only make him laugh—or who knows, the kind old soul might weep.

"Ah, that Monsieur Pomeroy—at his age, too!" they whisper and smile knowingly. "Either she is his daughter—the consequence

of an old sin—or something else—a more youthful sin! Ah! men, men!—That he should so disgrace his white hair!—Such a shame!”

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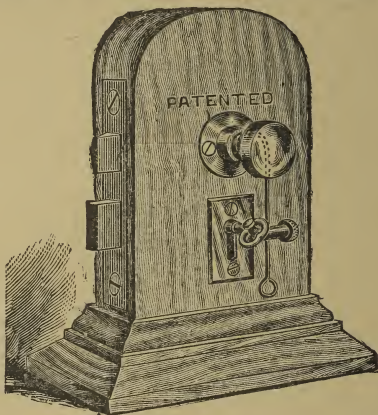
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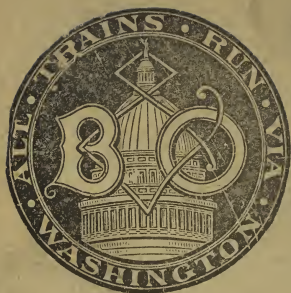
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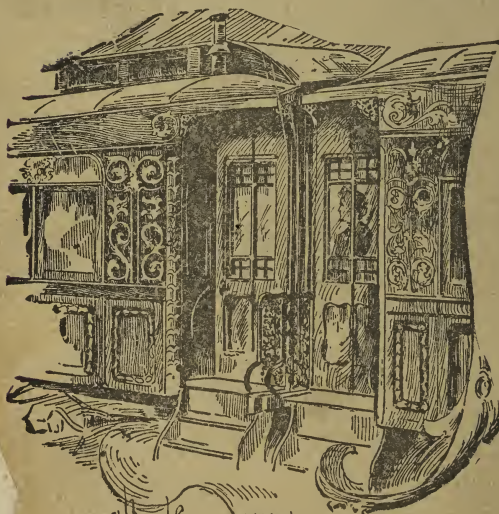
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